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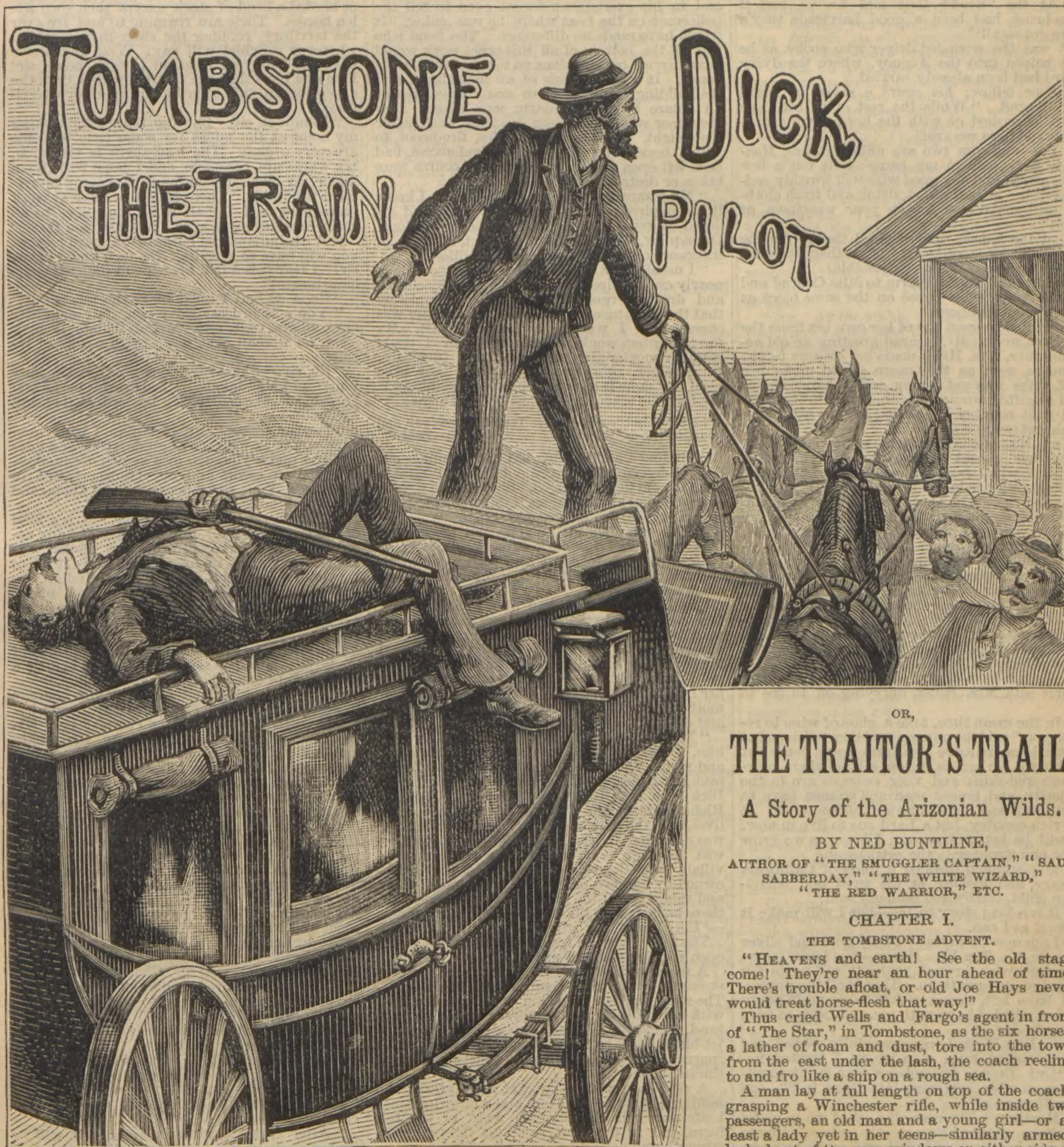
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OR, THE TRAITOR'S TRAIL.

A Story of the Arizonian Wilds.

BY NED BUNTLINE,
AUTHOR OF "THE SMUGGLER CAPTAIN," "SAUL
SABBERDAY," "THE WHITE WIZARD,"
"THE RED WARRIOR," ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE TOMBSTONE ADVENT.

"HEAVENS and earth! See the old stage come! They're near an hour ahead of time! There's trouble afloat, or old Joe Hays never would treat horse-flesh that way!"

Thus cried Wells and Fargo's agent in front of "The Star," in Tombstone, as the six horses, a lather of foam and dust, tore into the town from the east under the lash, the coach reeling to and fro like a ship on a rough sea.

A man lay at full length on top of the coach, grasping a Winchester rifle, while inside two passengers, an old man and a young girl—or at least a lady yet in her teens—similarly armed, looked out of the open windows on either side of the coach.

"What's up, Jack? What's up?" cried a

"GET A DOCTOR FOR BILL MEIGS BEFORE YOU ASK A QUESTION. HE'S AS FULL OF HOLES AS A SIEVE!"

dozen voices, as the old driver drew up in front of the Agency.

"Get a doctor for Bill Meigs before you ask a question. He's as full of holes as a sieve! I've got a couple o' rubs, but he is bad off!" cried the driver, looking back at the Express and Mail guard, who was stretched on the coach top.

In a second the ladder was up, and a half-dozen men were lifting the wounded agent down, while another ran for the doctor.

Just then one of the leading men of the place, Mr. Lem Hines, a mine-owner, rushed up to the stage door and reaching out his hand to the elderly gentleman inside, cried out:

"Is this *you*, Mr. Conrad out in this wild region? Can it be possible you have left a life of luxury in New York, to rough it out here with us?"

"Yes sir—I am here with my daughter Magdalena—all I have left, and to-day we have come through a baptism of fire and blood on the route!"

"Are either of you two hurt?"

"No sir—but we have had a close call; the coach is riddled with bullets, the guard is badly hurt, and I heard the driver say he was hit hard!"

"Road-agents, or Indians?"

"Both, if I could judge from what I heard when they tried to halt us. But the driver put on the lash and we all used the arms we had ready, and here we are!"

"So it seems—but poor Bill Meigs has got his last call by the looks of the doctor there, and the driver is hit hard, for I see he is down, now he has dropped the reins. How far back was it?"

"At the 'Bend'—they laid for us, and if sage-brush had been a good barricade they'd have got us all!"

It was the wounded driver who spoke, as he was helped into the Agency, where the dying guard had been already carried.

"Poor fellow; his courage saved us!" said Mr. Conrad. "While the rest of us used our rifles, he dashed on with the horses over everything and here we are!"

"Yes—and you two are unhurt, thank Heaven! But, come to my house—it is but a few steps away, and my good wife will warmly welcome you. A bath, food, drink and fresh clothing will make you forget your weariness at least!"

And the honest miner helped them from the coach and gave orders to have their baggage sent to his house as soon as possible.

Then he extended his arm to Miss Conrad and led the way to his house on the same block as the Agency and hotel.

Delighted to meet one of her own sex from the far East, and in Mr. Conrad greeting an old acquaintance, Mrs. Hines made her visitors feel at home as soon as they were seated under her roof. She was yet young and a handsome as well as gifted woman, capable even in that new and wild country of making a home attractive in almost every sense.

And Magdalena felt and appreciated this, after her recent terrible experience, when death, or what was even worse, a horrible captivity stared her in the face.

As soon as the baggage was brought in, chambers were assigned to the new guests and every facility rendered to make them comfortable. Bathing and a change of apparel worked wonders in their appearance, and the old merchant looked ten years younger when he came down into the parlor where Mr. Hines awaited him.

Soon his daughter came down, in company with her hostess, and the change was as apparent in her as in the appearance of her father.

Color had come back to her cheeks and the light of hope brightened her eyes.

"We will have dinner on the table in half an hour!" said Mrs. Hines, hurrying off to see to it.

"In the mean time, take a glass of wine to refresh you," said the miner, "and then tell me what induced you to leave civilization and come out in this yet barbarous region, a land where murderous red-skins and viler outlaws are in the majority, and honest men and women have to fight often and hard for an existence, even. It is a rich country, but a hard one to live in now. It will be better, however, I hope, as we grow older and stronger in the settlement."

The merchant drained a glass of California vintage, and looking at his tired and travel-worn child, fondly and tenderly said:

"It is a long story to tell—but I will make it as brief as I can.

"I am now on my way to my gold and silver mine in the San Rita Range—you know where it is, for it was through your advice I made my large investments there. That is all the property I have left, except a few thousand in ready money, which I have with me, and came so near losing to-day.

"In New York I was shamefully robbed and nearly ruined by a man whom I trusted implicitly! Do you remember a man in my counting-room when you were last there in '82—one Lew Mortimer?"

"Mortimer? The man who asked me so many questions about Arizona—the mines, climate and people—your head clerk and cashier was he not?"

"Yes—the same man—then trusted in every phase of my business!"

"I do remember him!" said the miner. "A tall, middle-aged, sanctimonious looking chap—I thought he was a model business man, ever at his desk, steady as clock-work!"

"Yes—but a very Satan in disguise! He grew up into a belief that he was so necessary to me in my business that I could not do without him. I had trusted him so much that he knew every detail, every investment, every deposit. I only withheld the power to sign checks from him, because I would intrust no one with that. He used to spend most of his evenings at my house, apparently to talk over business, and because he did not care for amusements and had nowhere else to go to pass leisure hours. I treated him as kindly as if he had been my brother. Upon this, he grew consequential, and at last, impertinent. Yes, sir—he had the effrontery to ask of me, the hand of my dear girl in marriage, even when he knew she detested the sight of him. When I kindly advised him to cast aside all such dreams, he was angry and said it would be better for both of us if his suit were listened to. I told him, after that he need not visit my house. I was foolish not to have discharged him instantly before he had time to carry out his plans of vengeance.

"Within a single week, after he was ordered to cease his visits to my house, my misfortunes commenced. My large store and warehouse were burned to the ground. That night the watchman was lured away for an hour, by a false message that his wife was taken suddenly sick and was dying. He lived two miles away and in his excitement forgot even to tell the policeman on the beat where he was going. It would have made no difference. The fiend who was at the bottom of all this cruel work would have carried out his plans no matter what intervened. It was the work of an incendiary, and the building was fired in so many places it was all ablaze before an alarm was given. Lew Mortimer was never seen in New York after that night. The great iron safes, fire-proof, to which besides myself only he had access, had been left open and their contents of course were taken or destroyed.

"My insurance was my first thought. I knew it had expired a short time before and had ordered it renewed and he told me it was done. On inquiry, I found this false. Not a dollar of insurance on a loss of over half a million.

"I usually had a bank balance to my credit of nearly one hundred thousand dollars. By checks and drafts forged in my name so completely that the signature seemed mine, this credit was overdrawn. I was in a fearful strait. My foreign orders would take every dollar I could raise by mortgaging my house and furniture. Ruin—utter ruin was mine. And that arch fiend had done it all and gone out of sight, leaving but this token, a letter with this threat:

"I have but commenced! I will follow you and yours to the death."

L. M."

"Finding I had nothing left but my mines out here, I determined to come here and remain until my fortunes changed. Should that wretch ever show up at the mines, I think I can trust to Arizona justice for my protection."

"You can indeed! A rope and the nearest tree would end his dark career! We have no protracted trials in court and merciful appeals out here. A criminal once caught stands no chance for escape."

"So I have heard. And now, good friend, I feel one need. I want a good, watchful, honest man to keep ever near me—not for my own protection, but to guard my child from harm. I know there are many perils in this wild region—yet I dread but one—that harm may come to her! She is more than life to me! Her dear mother's attributes, in face and form, in love and devotion, are all repeated in her."

"There is a man here, if you could employ him, whose courage and daring are unequalled, and whose faith and honesty are undoubted," said Mr. Hines. "He is known as 'Tombstone Dick, the Half-Breed,' but his real name is Richard Hartman. His mother, with whom he lives, was the daughter of a Cherokee chief. She was educated in the East, and while at school was led into marriage with a white man—a villain who deserted her within a year. Disowned by her own people, she has struggled on and raised one of the noblest-looking sons—Ah, there he comes up the street on his favorite horse—'Elk Hunter,' he calls him."

The merchant and his daughter hurried to the open window and looked out.

A man and horse—both pictures of perfect strength, grace and beauty—met their gaze. The man, clad in buckskin from head to foot, with a broad-brimmed sombrero on his shapely head, seemed motionless in his saddle, though the jet-black horse he rode bounded along as if he spurned the earth which he touched with his shining hoofs.

A rifle—a repeater—hung at the cantle of the saddle; a brace of revolvers and a large hunting-knife were belted around the waist of the tall form, and in the firm, well-knit figure, grace, strength and activity were all manifest.

He had no spurs on his moccasined feet—a

horse so full of life and spirit needed but a word from its brave rider's lips to urge it to the utmost speed it knew.

In complexion dark, with great flashing eyes and noble features, the man seemed fit for a sculptor's model.

As Mr. Hines called to him from the window, the half-breed drew his horse up suddenly, till it was almost on its haunches, and raised his hat courteously in salute.

"Will you come in a moment, Mr. Hartman? I wish to see you on business."

The half-breed bowed, dismounted, and patting his horse dropped the reins to the ground and left it standing, without hitching, to await his return.

A minute later, his form erect, his intelligent face unshaded by his hat, he stood in the parlor of Mr. Hines and bowed gracefully when introduced to Mr. Conrad and his daughter. Though garbed as a rude frontiersman, sunburnt and weather-beaten, he had the mien of a gentleman.

"Mr. Hartman!" said the merchant, "with my daughter I am on my way to my mines in the Santa Rita Pass. Do you know where they are?"

"You mean the Magdalena works, sir?"

"Yes! They are named after my daughter—my only child!"

"Yes, sir. I know them well. But it is a dangerous route just now. The Apaches are on the war-path, and a lot of renegade Utes and Mescaleros are helping them. Still worse, there is an organized band of white outlaws, who pretend to be 'cowboys,' though none of them ever herded a head of stock except their own stolen horses. These are roaming to and fro over the territory, robbing the stage-lines, working wherever mischief will pay! You had better have staid in your peaceful eastern home, sir! Fire and bloodshed are the rule rather than the exception in this rich but crime-ridden territory!"

"I know it, sir. But the reason for making my home at the mines for some time to come are very urgent. The lead there is very rich, my works are complete, and I hope with them under my own supervision to make my investment profitable. There is quite a force at work there now, and I shall work the mines to all their capacity as soon as I take the lead there."

"With Indians and outlaws to guard against you will have to keep half the men under arms, sir! I fear it is a bad investment under the circumstances!"

"Good or bad I must make the most of it!"

"You will at least leave your fair daughter here, where, rude and lawless though it may seem, no woman ever meets with wrong or insult!"

"No, sir!—where my father goes I accompany him!" said Magdalena. "I share his perils and hardships. We will never be separated except by death!"

"For that reason, Mr. Hartman, I wish to engage you to go with me as guide, scout and hunter, and under you such men as you deem necessary for an escort and our transportation to the mines. Your recompense shall be liberal and promptly paid!"

"I thank you, sir, for the offer. It is a kind of life that suits me. But I never make any engagement without consulting my mother. If there is any good in my nature, I owe it all to her, and though she is a full-blood Indian, she has qualities that any lady in the land might imitate without losing self-respect. I will see her and give you my answer within an hour or two!"

Bowing, he left the room, and the next instant he leaped into his saddle without touching a stirrup and bounded off at a swift gallop.

"A noble-looking man—honesty and courage in every glance of his eyes!" said Mr. Conrad.

"He is true as the steel he carries!" said Mr. Hines.

"When he first came here, the roughs and bullies tried to impose upon and annoy him because he had Indian blood in his veins. He bore a great deal without retaliation and they began to think he was a coward. But, one day, a crowd of them sneered at his mother as she passed in the street. Then they learned what a tiger he was. He knocked the bully of the town into the middle of the street, and when pistols were drawn he laid out six of the desperadoes in less than as many seconds. They have never disturbed him since. He is temperate, and never enters a saloon or gambling-den. As a scout and hunter he is unequalled. He hunts a great deal and never comes in empty-handed!"

"He is the very man I want and I must have him at any cost!" said Mr. Conrad.

"You will require an ambulance and a baggage-wagon from here; also one in which to carry forage and provisions!" said Mr. Hines. "And, at least, besides the driver, a half-dozen well-armed men for an escort!"

"Yes!" assented Mr. Conrad with a sigh.

He was thinking of the expense and his diminished purse. But the risk was great, and for his daughter's sake he would spare no precautions for safety.

"After I get Hartman's answer, it will be time enough to see to the rest!" he said. "If he goes with me I will trust all the other ar-

rangements to him. Used to the men under him, to the country and all surroundings, he will do best if left to his own judgment."

"You are right—but there goes the dinner-bell. It must be music to your ears after your long fast!"

"Sweeter music than the fiendish yells we heard an hour ago and the ping of bullets in the air!" said Magdalena, as she rose from her seat near the window.

She had been looking out on the street, seeing miners, cowboys, gamblers, teamsters and Mexican muleteers dashing to and fro—the town all life, hurry and excitement—a new picture indeed to her.

But the call to dinner was not unheeded, for all this; the late danger had not destroyed the appetites of the merchant or his child.

CHAPTER II.

THE OUTLAW'S CONFEDERATE.

AROUND the barricade of willow poles and sage-brush which had failed to stop the stage driven by Joe Hays, over a dozen Pimo Indians and three white renegades lay dead or dying when the coach dashed on in a cloud of dust at a speed which only a few well-mounted horsemen tried to match.

And these, when the two foremost fell wounded to the ground, gave up the mad chase, and, wild with angry disappointment, returned to the point of ambuscade, with the two men last hurt.

There, filling the air with his curses, sitting on his dead horse, while one of his men was striving to check the flow of blood from a bullet-wound in the shoulder, the leader of the party—an outlaw known through the West as One-Eyed Jones—counted up his losses.

"Three of our band, stone dead, a half-dozen more hard hit and a dozen of our red allies laid out, and all this done by three men and one woman! It is enough to make a preacher cuss his grandmother. But I'll get even with 'em, if they haven't got their dose. I know the driver and guard and they'll be marked for this. And that cussed stranger who put up the job and told us to be sure and not hurt the woman—why didn't he face the music instead of staying back in camp?"

"He said he was sick," said one of the band. "Had a chill or somethin' like it!"

"Cuss him! He'd have got warmed out of it if he'd been here and seen the woman shoot as well as the rest!"

"There he comes now! Our work is put in and the danger over so he is gettin' able to be around!" sneered another, as a tall man, whose pale face was almost hidden in a bushy-black beard, rode up on a fine horse.

"Did you get the girl?" was his first question.

"No—but she got some of us! I've a bullet in my shoulder from her rifle!" growled the leader.

"And you didn't stop the stage?"

"Nary a stop! They went through like a whirlwind and you can see what they've left behind 'em. Nearly all our Indian pards are down and some of my best men laid out!"

"Was there ever such luck! Are they beyond pursuit?"

"Bet your last red on that! But we are not. If there should be troops in Tombstone not more than an hour's ride from here, they'll be on our trail while it's warm. We've got to light out rapid. I s'pose you'll go along?"

"Not much, since the girl has escaped. I'm not going to give her up. I shall follow her up and at once. I'm not the one to give in because of one failure!" answered the stranger as they called him.

Anger flashed from his eyes and his tone was harsh and bitter.

"You're going to hand us over the thousand in gold you agreed to give if we took the job in hand for you?"

"You're cool to ask it when you have done nothing for me!"

"Done nothing, did you say? Do you see them stiffs on the ground? Is this hole in my shoulder nothing? You'll shell out that thousand, and more too, as sure as my name is One-Eyed Jones! And don't you forget it. Boys, keep an eye on him, put my saddle on another horse and head for the old cave in the hills. We'll see then if a galoot like him can go back on us. Shoot if he dares to try to pull out and get away!"

The outlaws still numbering ten resolute men, with a half-dozen silent, savage Indians at their backs, held their revolvers ready and the stranger knew that a peace policy was necessary.

"I'll pay up and add a bonus for the Indians!" he said. "But I am going on, so as to go into Tombstone, the place you speak of, after dark! I must know what has become of the girl!"

"Pay up like a man, and we'll not hinder you!" said the leader, rising to his feet.

The stranger dismounted, and from a pair of saddle-bags took one hundred and fifty golden eagles. One hundred he laid on a blanket before the outlaw leader, the other fifty he handed to the Indian chief, who silently watched his motions, and then said:

"So! White man got big heart! Buy blankets for squaws of dead warriors!"

"If you go into Tombstone, go to the house

of Calamity Jane and ask for Pete Parkerton!" said the outlaw chief. "Tell him—with my sign—you know it—I sent you, and he'll help you. If you need any of us after this, he can find us, no matter where we go. You've acted square, and we'll hold no hard feelings!"

"All right! I shall ride slowly on and make my way into the town when night sets in. If I need you, you shall hear from me! Where and how will I find the house of the woman you named?"

"By asking. Every man, woman and child in Arizona has heard of Calamity Jane. She has the biggest faro lay-out in the West, and holds her own as a dead shot if a heathen man tries to get ahead of her. Don't you forget that, and go slow when she is around!"

"She is a friend of yours?"

"Not much! But, she isn't an enemy! She is on the make, and runs the game for all it's worth! But, I must be off. The sooner we are out of here the better!"

All the men were mounted by this time, and leaving the dead where they were, the outlaws rode one way, while the stranger took another, keeping the road at a slow walk, heading toward Tombstone.

CHAPTER III.

CALAMITY JANE AS A CONFIDANTE.

THE frequency of attacks from Indians, road-agents and outlaws on stages, freight trains and travelers in Arizona made the matter so common that there was hardly any excitement in Tombstone, though Meigs, the guard, died soon after he was brought in, and the brave old stage-driver was laid very low with his wounds. The bravery of the young lady, who emptied her Winchester rifle among the attacking party, made the most talk in town, and much curiosity to see her was expressed among the male part of the population. Not but that they had women among them ready enough to shoot on provocation, and sometimes with very little of that, but the latter were not ladies in the proper sense of the term.

One of the most noted female shooters of the time and region, Calamity Jane, sat alone in her parlor just after dark that evening. She was richly dressed, for an hour later she would open her faro bank in person. Just then, in a sad mood, she was thinking of a grave that her hand had not filled, the grave of her ranchero lover who had been killed some time before in one of the too common affrays in town.

A servant announced a stranger who wished to see her on business.

"Send him in," she said, quietly.

A moment later the tall form of the man who had ridden on and left the outlaws behind was before her. A pair of piercing gray eyes peered out from his overhanging brows, and his pale face, or the little of it seen above his jet-black whiskers, was all unlike the faces she was used to looking on, bronzed and weather-beaten, scarred in conflict or marked with dissipation.

"You are the lady known as Calamity Jane?" he said, in a tone of inquiry.

She bowed her head affirmatively.

"I wish to meet a person named Pete Parkerton! I was told I would find him here."

"Not in my parlor, sir—but an hour hence you will be likely to see him at my faro bank. Do you know him?"

"No, ma'am; but I have a message from a friend of his named Jones."

"A one-eyed man—is it he you mean?"

"Yes, ma'am; a gentleman who takes toll on the highways, occasionally."

"Exactly. I take it you are one of the same fraternity, if you want to see Pete Parkerton."

"Not yet, ma'am. I am lately from the East; have some capital which I wish to invest to advantage. I employed Mr. Jones to carry out a transaction for me, but he failed in the work, and I have to take it in hand myself. I need some help, and that is why I wish to see Mr. Parkerton."

"You know he is a pretty hard case; shoots at a word, and drinks when he is dry, and that is about three-thirds of the time."

"I do not know much about him, but Jones said he'd help me."

"Well, try him; but keep the right side of him, or you'll go under."

"Thank you, ma'am. And now I have a favor to ask of you. I wish to remain unknown in this place, and to be seen as little as possible at present. When you know me better, I'll give you my reasons. I have considerable money with me and I wish you to take care of the main part of it, for I know this much of Arizona already, the less money a man carries on his person, the safer his life is."

"That is true as gospel. What may I call your name?"

"I answer now to the name of Ol Raymond. But it is not my real name."

"No more real than the whiskers you wear. What shape is your money in?"

"A Wells-Fargo draft for thirty thousand, twenty thousand in greenbacks, and a couple of thousand dollars in gold."

"You are well heeled! Why don't you bank it instead of leaving it with me, a stranger?"

"You are no stranger to me. I have heard

your history since you were sixteen years old, and the Pet of the Miners. I had rather trust my funds to you than to any bank in the country. If you are death to a foe, you never yet went back on a friend!"

"Not to my knowledge, Mr. Raymond. If you leave funds in my care, they'll be ready for you at call. I play a big bank, but I risk no money but my own. You say you wish to remain secluded. The saloon opposite is mine. I run the bank on the first floor. Over that, on the second floor, accessible by back stairs, are four bed-rooms. Here is the key to number two. A dumb-waiter reaches the restaurant side of the saloon below. You can order your meals by a note sent down on the waiter. In that house you come and go unquestioned. Parkerton, whom you want to see, occupies room three, next to the one I offer you."

"Thank you, ma'am! I accept your offer. In this pocket-book you will find the draft and greenbacks I confide to you. Look at them, and see they are all right. The gold I will keep for present use. A part I wear in my belt; the rest is in different pockets on my person."

"Shall I give you a receipt for this money?" asked the woman, having seen it was there as he described it.

"No. Your name is all the guarantee I ask. I heard of you long before I left the East. You have a leading man here named Hines?"

"Yes; but he is one of our solid men here, and no friend of mine."

"He is not an enemy. I heard him tell a gentleman a great deal about you, two years ago in New York. He said, though fate had thrown you among hard men, where only a hard life could be led, you were honorable and true to your friends on all occasions. He seemed to think you far above your surroundings."

"Well, I'll put that down to his credit. He never comes to my place, though. He is not a sport in any sense. And it is said his wife is one of the sweetest and best women in the world. I have seen her pass on the street."

"She has guests, I heard at the stable where I put up my horse."

"Yes. A gent and lady came in on the stage, who came near being wiped out down the road. They broke through an ambuscade, and fought their way in. The Express and Mail guard was killed, and the driver hurt bad; but the father and daughter inside the coach escaped injury."

"Rather strange. I didn't think outlaws spared anybody when under their fire."

"Most likely these people crouched down out of sight."

"No. At the stable the men who had heard the driver's story said both father and daughter had Winchester rifles, and fought the robbers off."

"Good on their heads! I like a woman with grit enough to shoot off something besides her mouth."

"So do I. That is why I sought you out."

"Bah! I am used to soft sawder. Praise don't affect me any more than soda-water. But you'll have to excuse me. It will be time to open the bank when I get across the street. If you will go to your room, I will send the man Parkerton up to you. If you need food or drink, send down by the dumb-waiter. I will give orders to supply and book your wants. You can settle when you leave. That's all—I never waste words. You had better drop over alone and go to your room, and not be seen with me, if you want to keep secluded here."

"All right. I'll take your advice, and thank you," said the man.

Calamity Jane took two gold-mounted revolvers, of large caliber but only pocket-size, concealed them in pockets made to receive them, and went out.

Two minutes later her visitor went to take possession of his room.

CHAPTER IV.

AN INTERRUPTED CONFERENCE.

MR. OL RAYMOND, as he chose to call himself, left the private residence of Calamity Jane, and passing around back of the saloon which she had pointed out through her front window, ascended to the second story by a steep staircase. Opening the door at the head of the stairway he entered a hall lighted by a hanging lamp and saw the doors of four rooms, two on a side, and each numbered.

Entering number two, he found a lamp already lighted on the large table in the room, and that a window fronting on the street was closely curtained. A comfortable bed, a half-dozen chairs and a small bureau with a pitcher of water and some glasses on top, in front of the hanging looking-glass, completed the furniture of the room.

"Comfortable, for one who has had to rough it, as I have lately," he muttered, as he drew a chair up near the table. "They're getting lively down in the saloon below, judging by the noise. I'm dry myself. I'll try the dumb-waiter and see if I can get a bottle of champagne. I haven't had a decent drink since I left the Hoffman bar behind."

He took a blank leaf out of a memorandum-book and penned an order for number two—a bottle of their best champagne and a cold lunch

for two. He was expecting a visitor, as we know.

The waiter was near the bureau, and dropping the note he moved the pull-rope and heard a bell ring in answer.

In a few moments he heard the bell again, and turning his glance to the waiter, saw, to his wonder, the well-remembered insignia on a bottle of Piper-Heidsick and a liberal lunch of cold fowl, bread, butter, cheese and pickles.

"This looks like life!" he muttered, as a sharp, quick knock at the door, repeated thrice reached his ear.

"Come in!" he cried, and then, remembering that he had brought the key in and locked the door, he sprung to open it.

"My name is Parkerton. The she boss below says you want to see me."

"Yes, sir—sit down."

And Mr. Raymond looked with curiosity on a tall, gaunt, hard-featured man, dressed very much in cowboy style, with a revolver on each hip and a huge bowie-knife belted in front—a man yet young in years but old in dissipation, if the signs read aright.

"Sit by the table, Mr. Parkerton. I'm dry and hungry, and have just ordered a bottle of wine and some grub," said Raymond, in a friendly way, as he placed the contents of the dumb waiter on the table.

"No wine for me—I'd as soon drink soap-suds. I take Bourbon every time when I can get it, or something else that has a little *lightning* in it!"

"All right, Mr. Parkerton; I'll order up a bottle of Bourbon. I believe in every man having what he likes, even if it is milk."

"Cussed little milk you'll get in Arizona," growled Parkerton. "We have cows, but we eat beef and drink whisky."

The Bourbon came up, and Raymond placed the bottle and a pitcher of water with glasses before his guest, and then opened his wine.

"Help yourself freely, Mr. Parkerton; there is the Bourbon and a pitcher of water at your hand."

"Water?" said the plainsman in disgust. "I never touch water when I can help myself."

Raymond thought the face and hands before him gave evidence that he spoke the truth!

"Whisky is good enough for me. I was brought up on it!" continued Mr. Parkerton.

"Dad kept store nigh the head of the Cumberland in old Kentuck and all I had to do was to go to the spigot and help myself from the time I was knee-high to a hop-toad. I never was nussed on milk or soap-suds. Bourbon and old rye were the beverages we-uns grew up on!"

"All right—take hold and help yourself, Mr. Parkerton."

"You've got my name by heart it seems! What might your name be, stranger?" asked the plainsman after swallowing a full glass of whisky to clear his throat.

"It might be Smith, or Brown, or Jenkins. But it isn't. I go by the name of Ol Raymond here. Calamity Jane might have told you that."

"She didn't! She only said a 'tenderfoot' in Number Two wanted to see me!"

"Well, Ol Raymond is the tenderfoot she alluded to. And she mayn't find me as tender as she thinks when I have a chance to show what I'm made of!"

"You look tough as a b'iled owl. But, how came you to know anything about me?"

"I was sent to you by one who told me to make this sign!"

Mr. Raymond drew his left hand, palm down, across his throat and with his right fore-finger closed his right eye.

"What—you've seen One-Eyed Jones?"

"Yes; I left him about four hours ago!"

"And got away with them sparklers in the front of your b'iled shirt and a gold ticker on and money enough left to board here where it costs a ten-spot every day and more if you drink soap-suds like that!"

He pointed scornfully toward the bottle of wine.

"Yes; I paid him for what he didn't do for me. We parted friends and I've money enough left to carry out every purpose. But I want help and am ready to pay liberally for it and you look as if you'd do to tie to!"

"You bet! If I go in on a lay, I go to stay. But if you want help from me, you've got to open out your game. I never go into a fight with my eyes shut!"

Talking made Pete dry. So he took a couple of glasses of Bourbon to moisten his throat. He didn't eat much, but, as he honestly confessed, he made up for the lack of solids in the liquids he poured down.

Mr. Raymond with his food had nearly emptied his bottle of Heidsick by this time, and the liquor in Parkerton's bottle was quite low.

"Well—I will tell you, Mr. Parkerton—"

"Hold on, right there! Call me Pete and I'll know who you mean!"

"Well, Pete—you've heard of some new arrivals on the stage, or rather, inside of it?"

"Yes; an old gent and his daughter—a plucky gal who shoots on sight!"

"True! If your friend Jones had earned the money I gave him, that young lady would now be in my power in his camp and her father

either a prisoner or dead. He would also have had the Mail and Express box, for his share besides. But they dashed through his ambushade, killing three of his men and some of his Indian allies and wounding him, not very badly though. He was in his saddle when I left him.

"Jumpin' Moses. I didn't think he'd take a job and fail. But when it rains lead, as it must with three Winchesters in good hands, something has to drop. How much did you give him? I mean One-Eyed Jones!"

"A thousand dollars in gold to him and half as much to the chief he had with him!"

"Not much out here!" said Pete coolly. "I won that much from a yaller-skinned Mexican last night at monte. But if he agreed to do a thing, he should have done it. Are you sweet on this gal?"

"Sweet enough to make her my wife or bu'st things. I've risked a good deal for her already—I'll risk more and win her or die in trying."

"You're hit hard, Mr. Raymond. I've never seen that woman livin' I loved half as much as I do old whisky. Hallo—they're at it downstairs!"

"I should think they were!" cried Raymond, as shouts, and yells, and, in a moment more, pistol-shots were heard below.

"They're cussed careless; look out! I'm goin' to see who is doin' this!" cried Pete as two balls came crashing up through the floor and table, shattering his bottle and shivering a plate to atoms. "Come, stranger, and see the fun—they're at it hot, now!"

Drawing a revolver he rushed for the door and stairs, and Ol Raymond followed, just as another ball came up and sent his empty wine bottle shattered over the room.

It was rather too warm up there, though he couldn't see who did the shooting, and he thought a change of base in order.

CHAPTER V.

THE GAME TO BE PLAYED.

HURRYING close on the heels of Parkerton, Ol Raymond got down in front of the saloon just in time to see Calamity Jane jump on a chair in the back of the saloon with a revolver in each hand and her cry, in a voice shrill and clear as a hugh call:

"Stop this muss! The next man that fires a shot in this saloon dies by my hand!"

Not another shot was fired. Only the groans of two dying men broke the dead silence that ensued. Three dead men lay stretched on the floor between her and the door.

"Brutes!" she added in a tone of intense scorn. "You can't take your drink and enjoy yourselves like men! No, you swill yourselves full and then snarl and fight like a lot of cur-dogs. Some of you who are sober enough drag them dead fools outside and tell the town marshal his coroner has a job before him. And, keep quiet after this. Your fuss has stopped my game!"

She now left her perch on the chair and went back to re-open the game.

"It's all over and I hadn't a sight for a single shot!" sighed Pete Parkerton. "We'll go back to your room, Mr. Raymond, and begin our talk again, where we left off!"

"Agreed!" assented the other, seeing that all danger was over—at least for the time.

And the two re-ascended the back stairs and re-entered number two, where Raymond wrote a note and sent it down on the dumb waiter. It read thus:

"Send some one up to clear away broken plates and bottles. Also send up another bottle of Bourbon and one of Heidsick. Tell your shooters down there to peg away at each other all they like, but we don't want their bullets in

"NUMBER TWO."

Raymond read the note to Parkerton. It pleased him.

"You're a cool cuss and I like you!" he declared. Some men would have squealed and quit the ranch!

"Lightning never strikes in the same place twice!" suggested Raymond.

A moment later a dark-hued woman, a Mexican, came up and cleared the table of its contents, broken glass and all. She made no comments, asked no questions—most likely was used to such little occurrences and did not mind the results so long as she kept out of bullet range herself.

Once more with wine and whisky before them, the servant gone and comparative quiet below, the two men began their conversation which had been interrupted.

"You were a-sayin', Mr. Raymond, that you were bound to marry that girl we were a-talkin' of!"

"Yes; years ago, when she was but a child, I set my heart upon it. And now that she has grown up, full of spirit and beauty, I am not going to be left out in the plans I've formed. And I have yet another reason. I know something concerning her father and herself that neither of them are yet aware of. When he is out of the way she becomes heir to a legacy which they have not heard of or they would not be here!"

"Why are they here and where are they go-

ing? They've surely not come to this rough place to live in?" said Parkerton.

"No; he owns a big mine, with a good working outfit, in the San Rita Range. He is going there to live—that is, if we let him get there!"

"We?"

"Yes—we; for I mean to make it an object for you to go in and help me. As far as money goes I am well 'heeled', as you say out here. And I am willing to pay well for help."

"That's square! I reckon we can hitch. I wish you drank Bourbon instead of soap-suds!"

"I can, on a pinch, though I'm more used to wine. You shall have all the Bourbon you want in reason! When at work you don't want to drink enough to muddle your brain!"

"I never do. My legs sometimes give way—but my head, never! Jones could have told you that, or the Boss down below. She knows me for all I'm worth. I've had to clear the ranch more than once when rustlers tried to crowd her! To-night they got their work in before I could get down to take a hand in. I'm awful sorry. I never waste lead the way them chaps did who shot up into the room here. I suppose, them that were down did that blamed fool work. When I throw lead it hits what I'm looking at!"

"So Jones told me! He bragged about your shooting qualities. But now, about the job I propose, I'm willing to keep you well supplied with pocket money, till real work begins. Here are ten golden eagles to open with. When that girl is my wife by fair means or foul, I will give you a hundred such pieces in addition to the pocket money I will keep you supplied with!"

"That's fair. What do you want me to do first?"

"Find out, without being mistrusted, when Mr. Conrad and his daughter mean to start for the mines, and how they will go. We have got to get in our work while they're on the route. We can do nothing here in a town full of people who would side with them if we tried to put in ugly work!"

"All right. I can't do anything to-night, but I know Hines well, and I'll find out what is up in the morning. Hines thinks I live by mining. I do work—when I have to, and that is when I'm flat broke and see no chance for a lift!"

"Have you a horse and rifle?"

"You bet! I've half a dozen bronchos in corral near by, as good a Winchester as ever came to shoulder and those six-shooters tell the story every time I call on 'em!"

"So far so good. Can you get a few trusty men who'll act without asking questions if they're well paid?"

"I reckon so. I can call Jones up when I want to, almost any day. He is never more than a day's ride from here, without the Vigilantes are hunting him. And if they go out, he gets a signal every time and they never can find him!"

"I see. Well, I shall turn in now. I'm tired. Take what is left of your whisky, to your room. We'll meet in the morning."

"All right, pard—you're an ace trump in a full hand. Good night!"

In a minute more Ol Raymond was alone with his evil thoughts.

Swallowing a bumper of wine, he drew a chair near the window, raised it a trifle to admit air and looked out on the dark street.

"So!" he muttered. "At last I am nearly face to face with the dainty girl who scorned my honest love when I had slaved for years in her father's employ to advance his fortune, hoping in time to share it. Her scorn has cost him dearly already, and the worst has not come. She shall never get beyond my reach now. Once mine, and surely so—then comes a *denouement* that will astonish her. She may find that there are millions to be had instead of thousands, and only through me. I've a long head over my shoulders if my face is not so handsome as some she has seen!"

He turned back to the table, took a package from an inside pocket and laid out several letters bearing foreign post-marks and official headings. He read one of these, and, in a tone of sardonic glee, said: "Those documents settle the game for me. I play high, and I will win!"

He again placed them in the pocket-book, and then laid them with his purse and revolvers under his pillow. His door was locked, and he prepared to retire to much-needed rest.

His glass was replenished for the last time that night, and raising it he said:

"Here is to Magdalena, my future bride!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE ORDER OF MARCH.

WITHIN the time asked for consultation with his mother, Tombstone Dick returned to the house of Mr. Hines, where Mr. Conrad and his daughter anxiously awaited his decision in regard to entering their employment.

A smile brightened his intelligent face.

"It is not for the employed to make special conditions with his employer," said Dick in a tone of apology; "but, situated as I am, I cannot, in so rough a place as this, leave my lone mother behind. No matter what dangers are before us, she would rather share them with me than be left here to worry about my perils."

Therefore, if you can spare a place for her in your ambulance, your daughter will find in her not only an intelligent companion, but one who can be very useful to her, knowing much of frontier life, as well as being forgetful of the customs of a better society, where she gained her education."

"It will be delightful—just what I want!" cried Magdalena. "I shall not be alone, as I dreaded, with no one of my own sex to talk with."

"Then I will agree to go with you, Mr. Conrad. The usual wages of a guide and wagon-master out here are all that I ask. For my mother's services only her board. One hundred dollars a month and rations will pay me. I can engage a few trusty men, willing to fight their way to the mines, and to work at fair rates when they get there. It will take four or five days to select these men, and to get up a complete fit-out of horses, vehicles, arms and ammunition. I propose an ambulance fitted with bedding to use at night for yourself, daughter and mother to travel in. Four good mules will do for that. A good part of the route is in deep sand, and two mules would break down. Two strong covered wagons for provisions, baggage and forage, with six mules each. Three drivers for these, five horsemen besides myself, all well armed, and yourself, will make ten men, and if fame speaks truth your daughter is a dead-shot and brave as the bravest. My mother owns a rifle and revolvers, and can use them well."

"Quite a formidable party!" said Mr. Conrad, smiling.

"Not so formidable if twenty or thirty Indians or white desperadoes should tackle us. But with care and constant vigilance, well intrenched, we could take care of ourselves, even against great odds."

"I am glad you feel so confident!" said Mr. Conrad. "It will give us courage to face a journey that *must* be made. I shall leave all arrangements to you. Come to me for the needed funds to purchase the outfit!"

"I will, sir, and make the best bargains for you that I can. To-morrow my mother will visit you, with your permission!"

"We shall be pleased to see her. Mrs. Hines has said so much in her favor that we know we will like her!" answered Magdalena.

Tombstone Dick now left, and, soon after, tea was announced and the evening meal enjoyed.

After tea, music was indulged in. Mrs. Hines had a fine piano and knew how to manipulate the keys. Songs, duets, marches and operatic selections followed one after another—Miss Conrad taking part in the programme.

Suddenly, as the night wore on, shouts and yells, followed by rapid pistol-shots were heard.

"The roughs are at it in some of the saloons!" said Mr. Hines, quietly, not even rising from his seat to look out.

"You must not be alarmed at what you see or hear in this town!" he continued. "It is not so bad now as it once was, but it is still lively at times. When I first came here, before I brought my wife out, the place buried seven or eight men every day—the result of careless cutting and shooting. Now, we do not average so many in a week. We are getting quite civilized—don't you think so?"

Mr. Conrad smiled, but his daughter took a more serious view of it.

"Have you no courts?" she asked.

"Yes. The principal one, however, is that of Judge Lynch, and his decisions and sentences are most feared. Murderers often get hung—horse-thieves *never* escape!"

"That is better than New York justice!" said Mr. Conrad. "If a murderer or a thief is a politician there, he generally boasts, and with reason, that hanging is played out!"

One of Mr. Hines's men happened in at that moment to make a report in regard to some mining work, and after hearing it, the mine-owner asked what the shooting was about, that they had just heard.

"Only some rustlers from the ranches trying to run Calamity Jane's saloon on their own hook. They have left three of their party ready for the grave-yard and the rest thinned out. That is an unhealthy spot, you know, sir!"

"True—especially when Calamity Jane takes a hand in. She is the best shot in the place!"

"What a singular name!" remarked Magdalena.

"Yes, and a singular woman, too. Once very beautiful, and still not unprepossessing, she has made and spent a half dozen fortunes in the new mining towns of the West. She came here from Deadwood when the mines first opened up and I reckon now she'll stay here till she dies. The only man she ever really loved was killed and buried here! I'll give you her history so far as I have learned it, before you leave. But to-night, tired as you must be, our greatest kindness will be to give you rest. To-morrow we will have plenty of time to talk, for Tombstone Dick will honestly see to all details for your trip and you will have ample time to look around before you start!"

"I must be off soon," said Mr. Conrad. "I have not means to waste on unnecessary delay!"

"Don't speak of that!" said Mr. Hines. "You can get all the money you want here, on the credit of your mines."

CHAPTER VII.

A NEW HAND IN.

A COMFORTABLE bed and the stillness which is ever noticeable after daylight in an open-all-night house held Mr. Ol Raymond in bed to an unusually late hour for him. It was eleven o'clock when he was awakened by a loud call at his door from Pete Parkerton—almost time for dinner instead of breakfast.

Hurrying on his clothes, after rising, he opened the door and admitted his visitor.

"You'll have to be up earlier than this, if you calculate to get ahead of Tombstone Dick!" advised Parkerton, who seemed quite fresh for one of his habits. "I've been up and around for four or five hours!"

"Who is Tombstone Dick?" asked Mr. Raymond, while he sent down an order for coffee and breakfast for two by the dumb waiter and proceeded to wash.

"About the smartest galoot in these diggin's—a half-breed Indian with the manners of a gentleman and the courage of a grizzly bear!"

"But what has he to do with me?"

"You'll have a good deal to do with him I reckon before you get the girl you're after!"

"What in thunder do you mean? Can't you speak out?"

"Not easy. I'm so dry!"

Raymond sent down an order for a bottle of Bourbon. It came up and after washing the cobwebs out of his throat as he expressed it, Parkerton was ready for an explanation.

"I got out early," he said, "and found Hines and pumped him dry in regard to that Conrad man and his girl."

"He is bound to his San Rita mines and the man I spoke of, Tombstone Dick, is to boss his whole outfit, act as guide and wagon-master, get the men for the escort, teams, teamsters and all. He engaged him last night!"

"Can this fellow you talk of be bought off?"

"Not much! He is honest as *Time*!"

"Can you not slip some of your friends in on him as escort?"

"I'll try. I wanted to ring in myself and spoke of it to Hines. But he laughed at me. He said Mr. Conrad was too much of a temperance man to load a wagon with Bourbon as he'd have to if I was in the crowd! I'll remember that on him. Just as if I lived on whisky!"

Mr. Parkerton's red face wore an injured expression as he drank another glass of Bourbon.

"I drink a little now and then, I acknowledge," he said; "but when that breakfast comes up, I'll show you how I can get outside of fried steak and Arizona onions."

And then he took one more glass of whisky, as a tonic, he said, to give him an appetite.

"How many men will this half-breed have in his party?" asked Raymond.

"That I couldn't find out yet, but I *will*, during the day. The man he'll buy his arms of will give me points. And I can tell, too, by the *animiles* he engages. But he is keen, and will hide his tracks all he can—most like, pull out from here in the night when he starts."

"You certainly ought to be as sharp as a half-Indian."

"I ought to be; but this fellow is ahead of everything around here. The worst rustlers we have steer clear of him. They've tried him more than once, and came out second best."

"We'll have to change his luck, then. If it costs me *fifty thousand* dollars that girl must come into my power!"

"We'll get her for less money; but if Tombstone Dick takes ten or fifteen men, we'll have to double up on him. He is equal to half a dozen ordinary men himself, and he'll pick the best he can get."

"So must we. Even if we call old Jones in, which I don't like to, after his failure."

"He don't often fail. The fault was this time he thought he had an easy snap, and was careless. He knows now that the old man and girl will shoot, which he didn't know before, and he'll look out for the odd trick, you bet, next time."

"Well, I shall have to trust to you in preparations to cut off and clean out this Tombstone Dick and his party, much as you say Conrad trusts to him. I'll furnish funds, and you must get men and their fit-out."

"All right, boss— But there comes the grub. I've got an appetite for it, as you'll see when we come down on it."

The meal was liberal—game, beefsteak and onions, with nice bread and rancid butter, and the coffee was strong. Mr. Raymond did what seemed to him fair work, as a trencher-man, but Parkerton was an eater as well as a drinker, and when breakfast was over the remnants left were few and far between.

After the meal was finished, Raymond told Parkerton that he had best engage the men he wanted ostensibly for a mineral prospecting party in the Indian range, where it was reported there were rich leads. That would account for numbers and arms. And he was not to engage any man who would not do all he was told to do without question. The more ruffianly

they were, if they had courage, the better they would suit him. He would *buy* their honesty to himself.

"Do you suppose Calamity Jane is up and around yet?" asked Mr. Raymond, when Parkerton got ready to go out on a further tour of discovery.

"Yes; I saw her Chinaman carrying some breakfast to her rooms before I came up."

"Then I wish you'd ask her to come over here after you go out. I'll tell her I am bound on a prospecting trip, and we'll have her help. I've good reasons for not being seen on the street till we pull out."

"All right, boss. I can do your work while you keep shady."

"Have you heard from that wounded stage-driver to-day?"

"Yes; he has gone under, died just before daylight. He had two bullets in him and the one in the lungs laid him out."

"Then he'll not suffer any more, so it's just as well. By the way, when you go to the post-office, ask for letters for Ol Raymond. I expect to hear from a lawyer friend in the East who looks out for certain matters there for me."

"O. K., boss. I'll ask, though they'll wonder, for I never get any letters for myself. You'd better put the name on paper, and I'll tell 'em you're a sick friend o' mine and can't go for yourself."

Raymond wrote an order for his letters should any be there, and Pete settled his breakfast with a glass of bourbon. Then he started on his errands.

In a short time Calamity Jane knocked at the door of Number Two.

Raymond opened it and bowed politely as he apologized for asking her to call on him, saying that he had special reasons for remaining *incognito* while in town.

"The truth is, madam, I have secret information in regard to a large mineral lead some distance from here, and I want to organize a party to develop it before any one gets on the same track. The mineral was discovered by a man whom I befriended in the East. On his death-bed he gave me a map of it, and information which will enable me to reach the spot, though it is in the Indian range and in a bad locality. But I think it will pay all risks. I did not at first tell you how I intended to invest my money, but I know from conversations I have had with Parkerton, that your advice and assistance in getting a body of good men together to go with me, will be of great value to me."

"All right. When you're ready, I'll name over some men who'll stick to you through thick and thin if you can make them see money in it."

"Thank you; I shall feel more safe and sure with men you commend."

"I didn't commend Parkerton to you. He is brave, a dead shot, and all that, but he hates work and drinks too much, though he always keeps a level head on his shoulders."

"I see through it, madam, and I can make him useful in certain contingencies."

"All right. I'll be glad to get rid of him. He is too quarrelsome around here. We are trying to get settled down into civilization here."

"I should think so. Here is a proof of it," said Raymond, laughing, and he pointed to the bullet holes in his table.

"Yes, I heard you were shook up a little last night," she said. "Some new cowboys from the Texan line tried the rustle game downstairs. But they got *civilized*. Three are in the graveyard and two in the hospital. The rest of their party will behave better after this, I reckon."

"I should believe it. Such lessons go a long way toward civilization," said Raymond, smiling, but in a sarcastic tone.

"Further than you think," she replied.

"Those galoots came in to run the town. But they struck the wrong crowd at the start. Are you well attended to from below?"

"Yes, madam."

"All right. If there is any neglect, notify me."

"I will, madam."

She now left, and in a few moments Parkerton came in with a letter.

"It has been here a week, the postmaster said," remarked Pete, when he handed over the letter.

Raymond opened it in haste, and an exclamation of surprise left his lips as he read it. An angry curse broke from him also.

"Bad news, boss?" asked Pete.

"Annoying! An English lawyer, not satisfied with a reply to a letter he sent over, in which I thought I'd put him on a false trail, has sent an agent over to this country. He has been nosing around on my trail in New York, and looking for parties he can't find there, and my lawyer is afraid he will come this way. If he does, it will be his last journey in this world."

"Is he on the same trail you are?"

"Yes—that is the worst of it."

"Have you got his description?"

"Yes—in full."

"Then don't worry. He can be taken care of before he does any harm. Give me the description, and I'll fix the rest."

"You read, of course?"

"I reckon I can, when I have to—though my gifts don't run that way."

"Read the letter—or here—the last part of it which holds the description."

Mr. Parkerton read slowly, as if he had to spell out the long words mentally as he went on:

"About thirty years old, slender and tall—say six feet—mustache and side whiskers fox-color, almost yellow; light-blue eyes, upper teeth show under his lip when he laughs—been filled with gold, which can be seen. Feels very smart, and brags of connection with the aristocracy in *Hingland*. A cockney of the first water. Goes by the name of Clarence Wilson."

"What does that last name mean?" asked Pete, after reading the description.

"Cockney? An English dude, who says 'art for heart, and honion for onion."

"Just so. I saw one over in Omaha. He put an *h* ahead of the *o* there, and they went for him red-hot. The last I saw of him he was running for the Council Bluffs bridge, bare-headed. I'll find this chap if he drifts this way, before he has time to ask a question. And when found—that ends all trouble for you so far as he goes."

"All right, Pete, you're a trump."

"So them say that has dealin's with me. Now I'll slide out and watch Tombstone Dick awhile. He is flyin' around on his black horse all over town. I'll soon see through his game."

CHAPTER VIII.

CALAMITY'S WARNING.

TOMBSTONE DICK, with full instructions to do his best to get up a perfect outfit in as short a time as possible to start with Mr. Conrad for the Magdalena mines, had his hands full of work.

First he selected a good strong covered spring-wagon, called an ambulance there. It had movable seats which could be taken out at night and replaced with thick mattresses for beds. These last could also in case of attack be used as a barricade for they were made of curled hair and would turn an arrow or a bullet or check its velocity even at the closest quarters. Good animals for it and two baggage wagons were to be had and at low rates, for the market had been overstocked by recent arrivals from Texas.

The greatest trouble Dick had was to secure good and trusty men—temperate, steady men who would face danger without flinching and work when the journey ended. There were plenty of men of a different class who offered for the trip. One of the first of these was Pete Parkerton. He was so anxious to go that he offered his valuable person at half wages, or even less. But he was known too well both by Mr. Hines and Tombstone Dick to receive a call.

Mr. Hines, used to such work, selected the stores, while Hartman purchased arms for such men as he engaged who did not have all that was required and of the best kind. He, too, laid in an extra quantity of the best fixed ammunition he could get.

All this took a good deal of time. Mr. Conrad had been the guest of Mr. Hines six days, when Dick reported the last man hired and all ready for a start.

Mrs. Hines and Magdalena had been out purchasing many articles that the latter knew she would need in her new home, where she understood no female had ever yet resided, and she would have to depend on herself and Dick's mother for woman's work when she got there. Chinamen acted as cooks and house servants at all the mines. And as yet the "Magdalena" had not assumed the importance of a town. It had no saloons, no gambling-houses, no dens of vice or dissipation. And Mr. Conrad hoped to keep his property forever free of such curses to honest industry.

Raymond, who never left his room, except for a little needed exercise under cover of night, had often from behind his window curtain seen Mr. Conrad and his daughter pass on the street, but little did they dream whose basilisk glance was falling upon them or what new perils were being laid out for their near future.

Equally busy, but working in secret and not openly like honest Tombstone Dick, Pete Parkerton, keeping wonderful sober for him, was carrying out the instructions of his new employer.

With plenty of funds to work with he was engaging many of the most desperate and hardened characters in the place to go with him to New Mexico to prospect in the Socorro Hills, where he claimed on a former trip to have found a rich show of mineral.

One thing was noticeable. No stage arrived without Pete Parkerton being at the Agency to meet it and carefully scan each passenger who came in it. He was on the lookout for the Englishman that Raymond had directed him to intercept at all hazards, so as to prevent his seeing those he was looking for before Raymond had interviewed him.

One afternoon Calamity Jane came unannounced to Number Two to have a talk with her lodger.

"I came in to give you a little advice!" she said. "It is your own money you are drawing and using so freely through Pete Parkerton. But I'm afraid you hardly know what a hard, des-

perate, lawless set he is gathering up for your prospecting trip. They'll *fight*—when they are full of whisky, but they'll never work except it be to keep from starvation!"

"When I get them where they'll have to work or starve, I reckon they'll do!" said Raymond, quietly. "I don't know the men, but Pete says they're as good as he can get!"

"Yes, as good as *he* can get, for they're all of his kind. Tombstone Dick has made up a first class fit-out for Mr. Hines's friend, the New Yorker—good, steady, hard-working men, who'll fight if they have to, better without whisky than with it. His wagons and teams are first-class, too!"

"I take no wagons, but pack my stores on mules," said Raymond.

"So much the more need to have good, steady men to manage your train. I am only a woman, and it is supposed a woman knows nothing about such matters, but I've traveled over the plains and through the big Rockies with my own outfits and trains, and know what I talk about. You've had confidence in me, trusted your money to my care, and I don't want to see you robbed, if I can help it!"

"I thank you, madame; I'll keep my eyes open. But, you see, I wanted to get off on the quiet and had to trust to Pete a great deal."

"On the quiet?"

She laughed as she echoed his words in a tone of sarcasm. "Why, the trip is talked over in every saloon in town. Only as yet they do not know who is to lead them!" she added. "Pete has given out that the man who backs him is to come on by stage and pretends to be looking for him on every trip in!"

"I know that. The truth is, I am expecting a friend on, a young Englishman who is to join me. Pete watches for his arrival."

"Well, I have relieved my mind. If you get skinned out by the gang, it will not be through my neglect."

And Mr. Raymond's visitor rose and left as abruptly as she came.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ENGLISH ENVOY.

It was Saturday afternoon when Tombstone Dick reported all ready for a start. His mother had closed up her little home and left it under the watchful eye of Mr. Hines as her agent, and now occupied a room in the house of the latter, where she could better assist Miss Conrad in her final preparations for the journey.

Mr. Conrad had decided to pull out on his journey very early on Monday morning, for he was not a Sabbath-breaker. But Mr. Hines noticed an uneasy look on the face of the half-breed, when he was making his report.

"Is there anything lacking in the supplies, Hartman?" he asked.

"No, sir. No better train, considering its small size, ever went out of Tombstone. Every man true and reliable—Every animal in good shape, stores and equipments all that can be desired."

"And yet something is wrong. I see it in your face, Richard Hartman. What is it? I am Mr. Conrad's friend and yours also."

"I know it, Mr. Hines, and I'll tell you what troubles me. I've been hounded and watched all the time I've been gathering up the outfit. You know Pete Parkerton?"

"Yes—a drinking, worthless fellow that hangs around the saloons and pretends to gamble for a living!"

"Pretends. That is the right word in the right place. He plays sometimes when he comes across a drunken flat that don't know how to take care of his dust, but I am sure he has been, if he is not now, a regular road-agent. I think he is acting here as a spy and recruiting officer for a gang. He has plenty of money all the time, and never was known to work for a single hour. He is pretending to get up a prospecting party to go to the Socorro Hills in New Mexico. He boasts that he is backed by an Eastern capitalist whom he expects to join him before he starts!"

"Yes; I've heard the story. But he has no mining experience."

"No, sir, and the fellows he picks up have none, either. The fellow is studying out some mischief. He may think from my paying cash and good prices, for our outfit, that Mr. Conrad has a good deal of money and be laying out a plan to attack us after we have gone beyond the reach of help!"

"Ah! That is serious, and I do not wonder you are annoyed! I wish we had some Government troops here, now. I would try to get an escort for you!"

"There are none nearer than Tucson, and we couldn't get them for a little private party like ours, any way. I only hope to get a good start, and once on the route to keep out of their way. I have the best men and the best animals that are to be had, and if it were not for my mother and Miss Conrad being along I wouldn't mind it. I hate the thought of having to fight when stray bullets might reach them!"

"I'll try and work some plan to head off this rascal in any plans he has formed. I'll see that he is told Mr. Conrad is so poor he'll not be worth robbing. That may set him back!"

"Yes, if he believes it. He is keen, if he does keep half-full of fire-water all the time. He offered to go in my outfit, but he knew I wouldn't take him. His object was to find out who was going with me, I think. Ah—the stage is in; they're a little late. Must have had a load of passengers. There is a new driver on since poor Hays went under!"

Mr. Hines, with Dick, looked from the open window and saw several passengers get out of the stage in front of the hotel and express office.

One of these, a tall, slender man, with an eye-glass set over one eye and a large grip-sack in his hand, was met by Pete Parkerton, who seemed to know him, for he grasped his hand, spoke earnestly to him and then catching up his traveling-bag hurried him along down the street toward his own lodgings.

"There may be something in Pete's story of an Eastern capitalist after all!" said Hines. "He certainly knows that man, for they're going off together in the manner of old friends. He looks like an Englishman, with that eye-glass, foxy side-whiskers and mustache!"

Pete and his companion were out of sight in a minute, and as Mr. Conrad came in just then from the room where he had been writing letters, the conversation turned upon another matter.

And we will take time to investigate the new arrival on our own account.

When the stage came in, Pete Parkerton stood on the sidewalk in front of the Agency, as he had been doing at the same hour for several evenings. The instant it stopped, and he saw a man who answered the description given in the letter sent to Raymond, he pressed forward and reaching out his hand in the most friendly way, cried out:

"Glad to see you here safely, Mr. Clarence Wilson. We expected you a week ago."

"Ow in 'Eaven's name did you know me, when I never 'ave been 'ere before?" cried the man in wonder, as he shook hands with Pete, who helped him from the stage and grasped his traveling-bag.

"Oh, we were apprised by letter of your coming, Mr. Wilson, so come right along to your quarters. Supper is ready and I reckon you are ready for supper!"

"Yes—I'm as 'ungry as a howl! You are not Mr. Conrad, are you?"

"No, Mr. Wilson, he is my employer. Speak low; there are a lot of thieves and roughs around. Mr. C. is waiting for you at his rooms. Hurry on; he got a letter from England only a couple of days ago about the matter you were sent over on, and is just wild to see you and your papers!"

And Pete hurried on so fast that Mr. Wilson could but just keep pace with him.

In less than three minutes he had Mr. Wilson at the door of Number Two.

"Here is Mr. Conrad, the gentleman you wish to see!" cried Pete, giving Raymond the wink. Then he added, "This is Mr. Wilson—Clarence Wilson that your letter told you was on the way!"

"Yes. So Mr. Habernethy wrote you I was comin'? 'Ow kind of 'im! For I've been nothin' but a stranger hever since I was in the blarsted country! I suppose he told you your huncle in Hingja was dead?"

"Oh, yes, and I'm glad to see you, Mr. Wilson. You must be tired and dry and hungry! What will you have? You can wash the dust off in that basin, and I'll order up anything you would like!"

"I'd like a pot of hold Hinglish hale, hif hit can be 'ad!" sighed Mr. Wilson as he threw off his duster and went for the wash-bowl.

"Ale, champagne, anything you like, sir!" said Raymond promptly.

"Let it be hale, and a bit o' bread and cheese with hit."

Instantly Raymond wrote his order for a couple of bottles of the best ale and a cold lunch, to include bread and cheese.

They came up while Mr. Wilson was washing, and with them a note to Raymond from Calamity Jane.

He turned pale when he read these words:

"You are in *danger*, I fear! The town marshal was in 'ere just now asking for Pete Parkerton and an English stranger he had decoyed away from the stage. Look out! I sent the marshal off on a false trail. C. J."

CHAPTER X.

WILSON'S PREDICAMENT.

PARKERTON saw at a glance in Raymond's face that something was wrong below. And with a bad man's intuition, he partly took it in. He said aloud, so the visitor could hear it:

"Haven't you a minute's time, Mr. Conrad, to look at them mineral specimens in my room, while Mr. Wilson is taking his ale?"

"Yes, if it will not take more than two or three minutes. Wait till I open a bottle of this ale and put the lunch on the table."

By this time Raymond had got over his tremor and was calm.

He opened a bottle of the bright-beaded ale, and set the waiter containing bread, cheese and cold meats, on the table, then said to his guest:

"Excuse me a minute, Mr. Wilson, and make yourself at home at the table. You'll find the ale genuine, I think."

"No doubt habout that!" cried the Englishman, as he lifted the bottle and looked at the label. And he sat down to enjoy much-needed refreshment, while Raymond and Pete entered the room of the latter on the other side of the hall.

"What's up? You looked as white as milk when you read that note!" exclaimed Pete the instant the door was closed behind them.

"Read it! We are in danger! The marshal is hunting for you and this cockney!"

"Let him hunt! In two hours he'll be dead and buried, or else in a safe place where no marshal can ever reach him!"

"I don't want him killed—at least not now. Abernethy, who has sent him over, is the attorney in England for the property I am after. And I want to pump this fellow dry before he is out of my reach. He must have papers I want."

"Well, I've a plan. Here is a dose of sleeping-powders. I use 'em on chaps I want to play a skin game on sometimes. Get that into a glass of his bitter ale. He'll be so sound asleep in ten minutes after it that he'll wake up only when I've got him safe over ten miles from here, where we can interview him at our leisure, as the reporters say when they get a gudgeon hooked."

"How can you, how dare you do it, when the officers are looking for you?"

"Bah! I don't scare easy, nor fail in what I undertake. Do what I tell you—drop that powder in his ale while I show him a gold brick. I've got one here that's *salty*—bet your life it is!"

And he took from a drawer what never would have been left so careless had it been genuine gold, as it really looked to be.

In less than three minutes the two men were back in Number Two. Mr. Wilson looked happy. He had drained a glass of foaming, sparkling ale and just poured out another. He had a slice of bread and a generous piece of cheese in his hand and was eating as if half famished.

"Did you ever see as much gold in one lump as this, Mr. Wilson?" asked Parkerton, holding up the brick as he stood behind Wilson's chair.

"Gold? Is that hall solid gold?" Exclaimed the Englishman, turning clear around to look at it, giving Raymond his opportunity.

"Yes sirree! Just take it in your hand. The weight will speak for itself. I dug the ore myself!"

"My! 'Ow 'eavy hit is!" cried the Englishman. "'Ow much might hit be worth?"

"About three thousand dollars—eighteen carat fine. You can see the assayer's stamp on it. But go on with your supper and I'll tell you where I got it when you're through. There's tons more where I got this!"

Wilson gulped down another bite of cheese and then raised the 'doctored' glass of ale. It was like all ale, so bitter that he detected no change in it, of course suspecting nothing. Raymond uncorked the second bottle and joined his guest in a glass to keep him company as he said.

And Peter went to the bureau and poured out a glass of Bourbon for his share.

Mr. Wilson kept on eating, but not so eagerly, and though he partly emptied one more glass of ale he was yawning before he got it down.

"I feel awful sleepy!" he said. "Hand no wonder. I've traveled day and night right halong till I'm almost worn hout!"

Lay down and rest on my bed. We'll talk over our business when you've had a nap!" said Raymond.

"Thankee—I b—believe—I will!" said the other and aided by Raymond he laid down.

He was asleep—sound asleep almost as soon as he touched the bed.

It was dark out of doors now. This Pete Parkerton discovered by a glance from the window.

"I'm off for a couple of horses!" he said. "I'll be back behind the house in ten minutes and I'll have this fellow in a safe place in an hour or a little more. Then I'll be back and show myself all over town and see what they'll make on the game!"

"You're a bold one!" remarked Raymond, in a tone of admiration.

"I know it, boss. When I work a game I make no slips!"

He was gone. The instant after Raymond concealed the carpet-bag or grip-sack of the sleeping Englishman under a lot of rubbish in a closet.

Scarce ten minutes went by and Parkerton came back.

He shook Wilson harshly, but not even a grunt such as would come from a drunken man left his lips.

"He is sound for an hour or longer," he said.

And taking him up on his shoulder, easily, as he would have lifted a sack of grain, he made Raymond settle his Derby hat well on his head, and then walked out into the darkness with him.

Raymond went as far as the head of the outside stairs, stood there and listened. In a short time he heard the sound of horses loping off to the westward. Then he returned to his

room. Nervous and anxious, he sent the empty bottles and remains of the lunch below, and ordered a bottle of wine for himself. The note from Calamity Jane he held in the blaze of his lamp until it was utterly consumed.

Slowly he drank his wine, pondering over his plans for the future, and wondering where Parkerton could take the man and leave him safely, and how he would explain matters if questioned by the authorities when he returned.

The town had just begun to grow lively when the well-known knock of Pete sounded on the door of Number Two.

"I've ridden twenty miles, put our friend in limbo, and got back in just two hours and a half. How is that for speed?" he asked, as he rushed for his bottle and poured down two glasses of fiery Bourbon in as many seconds.

"Wonderfull! Where did you leave him?"

"You'll know by and by, when you go to talk with him. Now, I've got to throw the marshal off the scent, if he is looking for me."

"How?"

"With cheek. That man was my backer; he didn't want to stay in town with a pile of cash on him, and so lit out with a part of my men on the course I'm to take for my mines. He can't prove nothing else, and I reckon he'll not try to. He don't like my way of using a shootin'-iron if I get riled. Have you overhauled the fellow's bag, to see what he has in it?"

"No, not yet; I waited for you."

"That's O. K. We'll go halves in what's in it, pard. I'll be back in two or three hours—maybe sooner, if that official galoot swallows my gammon easy."

Pete now looked to his knife and revolvers, to see that they were at hand and fit for use, and started out.

And Mr. Raymond took a look into Wilson's bag, for he wanted to know what was in it before he halved with Pete Parkerton.

There was a bag of English sovereigns, perhaps a hundred or a few more, for Raymond did not count them. He was looking for papers. He found them. Written instructions to Clarence Wilson to search for Mr. Ovid Conrad and when he was found to deliver to him certain papers.

One, a copy of a will made in India by Spence Conrad, devising a vast estate in bonds, cash, personal and real property in India and England to his nephew Ovid Conrad, merchant of the city of New York, United States of America; or, if he was dead, to his children, if he had any, or the next of kin to said Spencer Conrad.

These papers were duly certified as copies and with them was a long letter from the lawyer Mr. Michael Abernethy, telling Mr. Conrad to draw if need be on the estate, and to come as speedily as possible to make his claims good and keep the property out of chancery.

"This settles your fate, Mr. Ovid Conrad!" averred Mr. Raymond, thoughtfully. "With you out of the way, and your daughter my wife, all those millions come within my grasp. Once I would have taken her without a penny and toiled my life away in her service. Now I'll make a better thing of it! I wonder where Pete left the agent? He is no use to me and may as well be put where he can tell no foolish stories."

The reader may have the same curiosity in regard to the poor drugged son of Britain.

When Pete Parkerton carried him out in the darkness from Number Two, he hurried off to where two of his best mustangs stood saddled, waiting for him.

In one saddle he lashed the form of the unconscious Briton, and then getting on the other horse holding up the form of his captive he ran both horses side by side at full speed for nearly an hour until he reached a hilly range where he had to go slower, the ground was so rough and broken.

Through the darkness he picked his way amid rocks and chaparral brush a mile or more. Then he halted and blew three shrill notes on a whistle at minute intervals.

This signal was speedily answered from some one not far away by two short notes. Pete answered with one and a second later a voice shouted:

"Who is there?"

"Peter the Kid!" was his reply.

"All right—I'll show a *glim*. Ride right in, Pete!"

The latter rode forward to where a torch blazed out showing, as he passed a fringe of bushes, the entrance to a large cave.

Riding within, he came into a large room which contained ten or a dozen armed men who all seemed to be enjoying themselves, smoking, at cards or in some other way.

"Hallo, Jones—how goes it, old pard?" was his cry as he dismounted, and then set to work to unloosen his companion from the saddle where he had been so securely fastened.

"I'm getting on—got a lame shoulder, but Sam Rickhard cut the ball out and it is healing fast," cried the one-eyed outlaw chief, for this was the same who didn't stop the stage. "Who have ye got here?"

"A young fellow from over the water that I want held in limbo, safe and sound for a while.

I'll pay big board for him if you keep him where he can see no one and no one see him!"

"All right! I'll put him under Old Sal's care. She can't talk his lingo, but her teeth and claws are worth all the prison gates that ever slammed to! What keeps him so still?"

"He had a dose of morphine in his beer. We have a game in town that he is fly on, and we must keep him out of it for a while. Ah—he is coming out of it—I run the horses all the way and I expected it would jolt the sleep out of him."

"Oly saints! where ham I?" he moaned, as he opened his eyes in stupid wonder.

"In a 'ole in the ground!" said Pete, mockingly. "Pard, you're to board here till I come after you in a week or two. Ta-ta, I must be off. Look out for signals, Jones; I may want to see you at the old spot in a day or two."

As he said this, Pete sprang to saddle, and followed by his second horse, rode out of the cave and off at a gallop.

"Dear me! this is 'orrible. Where ham I, I hask hagain?"

"Ask no questions here—for you'll get no answers," said the one-eyed chief. "If you're able to walk, follow me—if not, I'll have you carried!"

"I'm sore hall hover, like I'd been pounded—but I'll walk!" decided the scared Englishman.

For every man he saw wore knife and pistols, and all had harsh-looking, repulsive faces.

The chief, when he told him to follow, took up a torch and led the way through a passage with several turns, into a high but narrow room in the rocks. As he entered this dark place, a savage growl scared Wilson so that he stood stock-still and gasped out:

"'Eavens and hearth! What's that?"

"Sal—my pet cougar, and your jailer!" was the stern reply. "I'll take you in safely. If you try to come out alone she'll not leave a whole bone in your body. Be still, Sal, it's me!"

Wilson shuddered, for what first seemed to be two glowing balls of fire, he now saw were the glaring eyes of a huge animal, whose teeth and claws reminded him of those seen on lions and ferocious tigers in menageries.

But the chief led him past the growling beast, which he saw was chained with a long chain that enabled it to move to and fro across the passage which it thus guarded.

Pointing to a pile of skins and blankets inside of where the animal crouched, and out of its reach, the chief said:

"There's a bed for you. When day dawns you'll get some light from a hole away up overhead. If you're hungry there's some dried venison hanging up there, or you can slice off from a ham if you want. In that barrel there's some hard bread. And there's a spring runs from the rock right across by where Sal lays. Sleep, eat or drink when you want to. But, if you care for life, don't get in reach of Sal. She'd kill and eat you up for one meal."

"I'll not move till you come for me; but, oh, mister! I'd like to know *why* I'm put in 'ere! I 'aven't done no wrong!"

"Be still! I told you to ask no questions. I'll look in and maybe bring you a pot o' coffee to-morrow!"

The man turned on his heel and strode away, and poor Wilson dropped down, terror-stricken and almost dead, on the pile of skins and blankets.

"Oh why—why did I ever come to this blarsted country?" he groaned. "There's nothink but 'ighway robbers, road-hagents, cowboys and wild savage Hinjuns!"

He wept aloud, making so much noise that the beast seemed to be angered, for it uttered an ominous growl which terrified him into instant silence.

Creeping under some blankets, he hid away, shivering and sleepless, laying there for hours until a gleam of daylight came down through a fissure far above in the rocky roof.

Then he moved and thought he would wet his feverish lips in a rill of water trickling out from the rocks. He reached the water, caught some in the palm of his hand and moistened his mouth.

As he did so, he saw an old battered tin cup within reach, and filling it, he took a long, sweet draught from the ice-cold spring.

This refreshed him, and he rose to his feet to look around. He saw the tawny form of the cougar and heard the rattle of its chain as it paced to and fro across the passage in front of him.

He thought it might be possible to coax it into friendship, and he took a cake of hard bread from the open barrel close at hand, and tossed it toward the beast.

A growl so sharp and fierce broke from its red mouth, that he sprang back as far as the black rock would let him get, violently trembling, and scarcely breathed for fear it would break its chain and spring upon him.

"'Orrible! 'orrible!" he groaned.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MARSHAL TAKES A HAND.

"WHERE have you been all the evening, Pete Parkerton? I've been looking for you!" was what Town Marshal Boyd said to Raymond's

right-hand man when he met him in a saloon near the place kept by Calamity Jane, just after the rough left Number Two.

"Out on a ride since just afore dark, as you can see by the dust I carry and the spurs on my heels. What did you want to see me for?" was the cool reply.

"I reckon you know. What has become of the stranger you enticed away from the stage when it came in?"

"I've seen no stranger. I met a friend that I was expectin' in the stage; been lookin' for him more'n a week."

"That's too thin, Pete. You met a man that was comin' to see some one else, and enticed him off."

"Bill Boyd, you lie!—under a mistake, I mean. You needn't offer to draw, for I can pull as quick as you, or a trifle sooner. The man I met shook hands with me as soon as we met, and I can prove it by twenty men, and went off with me to meet men whom I had all ready to start on the trail for my mineral stake in New Mexico. I went near two hours' ride with him. He'll camp twenty mile out or more to-night. Do you think I'm alone without a backer when I've got near thirty men under pay to go to the mines with me?"

"It don't look so. But you're a deep one, Pete Parkerton. I'll look into this matter. If there has been foul play, you'll find that there's law and order in Tombstone now."

"A cussed sight more law than order," growled Pete. "Where was your order when three dead men, and two nearly as bad off, were snaked out of Calamity Jane's place the other night? When a gang of rustlers try to paint the town red, you've got business somewhere else. You'd better put your head to soak afore you tackle a quiet, hard-workin' man like me."

Boyd laughed outright. The idea of Pete Parkerton working was too funny.

Even Pete smiled, though he had tried to put on an injured look.

"I reckon you'd better take a glass o' Bourbon with me and call it quits," said Pete, willing to be friendly with the official.

"Not yet. When I'm satisfied you're on a fair deal, I'll drink with you as quick as any other man. But remember I've eyes in my head."

Boyd passed on.

"So has any other dog; but all dogs don't bite that bark," muttered Pete, too low to be overheard by the officer walking off.

The latter was really a brave man or he would not have held his position a week; but he was careful and prudent. Well he might be. Three of his predecessors in office had been killed in rapid succession. He had held his place less than a year, and several narrow escapes had already shown his peril.

Pete went into the saloon owned by Calamity Jane, took "a taste" of Bourbon at the bar, and then looked at the game in the inner room. He saw the fair dealer cast a quick, anxious look at him, as he sauntered in, and he smiled as if to assure her he was all right. To add to the assurance, he walked up to the board and threw down a couple of eagles on the queen.

He won, took up his money, laid it on the king and lost.

"Luck's even!" he cried. "I'll not take any risks to-night."

And with a laugh he sauntered out.

Calamity Jane felt easier then about the lodger up-stairs. She had begun to take quite an interest in him. He was quiet, good pay, and in conversation could be very winning when he chose to be.

He was so different from most of the men in the place, and the difference was in his favor.

Pete Parkerton went from saloon to saloon, warning the men he had engaged to keep sober enough to be ready for a start at any moment, for he should pull out at short notice when he went.

Several times in the course of his meandering he met or was passed by the town marshal, and he felt sure he was being watched, so he could be tracked down.

He laughed to himself as he thought how wisely he had acted for his real employer in getting the cockney out of the place unseen.

Meantime there was much uneasiness in the house of Mr. Hines. Three stage passengers, who had ridden inside with the Englishman, told Mr. Hines that the latter had told them he was looking for Mr. Ovid Conrad, with whom he had very important business.

Now, as he had not come near Mr. Conrad, and had been seen to go off with a notorious desperado, it was but natural that the merchant should feel a desire to have him hunted up, so as to learn the nature of his business.

The town marshal was sent for. He had been with the Pinkertons before he came West and was considered a brave, smart man.

The first thing this officer did was to examine the way-bill at the Stage and Express office. The name entered by the Englishman was "Clarence Wilson, of London, England."

Returning to Mr. Conrad he asked if he knew any one by that name.

"I have no remembrance of the name!" replied Mr. Conrad. "In my mercantile life I

had many foreign correspondents. But it would be impossible for me to recall half or even a fourth of their names without I had my letter-files to examine!"

"Have you relatives in England?" continued the officer.

"None that I know of since my father died. He had a brother whom I have not heard from for many years. He was a trader in the interior of India!"

"What was his name?"

"Spencer Conrad—he was my father's only brother!"

"Married?"

"Not when I last heard from him!"

The marshal noted all this down. He was forming a theory. All detectives do. They work on their theory for clues. "When formed," they follow them up.

"I'll hunt for the man till I find him, dead or alive!" he said when he went out.

He interviewed Pete Parkerton as we already know. He heard his story and didn't "take stock" in it—in other words did not believe it. Yet he did not ask Pete for the name of his pretended friend and backer—not then. He intended to spring it upon him later.

After he had heard Pete's story he went back to see Hines and Conrad and hold a consultation. He told them just what Parkerton had told him. Also that the man looked as if he had just come in from a hard dusty ride.

"There is a mystery in this case I would give much to unravel!" observed Mr. Conrad.

"So would I!" declared the marshal. "From the passengers that came through I could not learn that the Englishman showed much money. He seemed close and penurious, drank no liquor except ale or beer and grumbled at the price and quality every time he took it. There is something more than robbery in this disappearance!"

"Not murder, I hope!" returned Mr. Conrad, with a shudder at the thought.

"Not without it is to further some deep-laid plan!" said the marshal. "Has it ever occurred to you that your uncle in India might die and by will or rights of kindred leave you a legacy?"

"I do not know that I ever thought of it till now!"

"Is there no one else related to you that might want such a legacy if it had been left?"

"I have not a relative in the world if my uncle is dead, but my dear daughter. My wife had some relatives, but none of them would have any claim on a legacy such as you speak of. And it seems to me if such a legacy had been left me I would be notified by mail!"

"Letters are often intercepted by interested parties!"

"True!" said the merchant thoughtfully.

"And if answers to letters sent were not received by the original sender, perhaps a special messenger might be employed!"

"That seems also to be likely!" replied Conrad.

"And the same party or parties who intercepted the letters," continued the marshal, "might lay in wait to intercept the special messenger!"

"The theory is perfect. You think this Englishman might have been such a messenger?"

"Yes—because he spoke of being employed in a law office in England, in some incidental stage conversation!"

"But this Parkerton, if I hear aright, is a low, drinking, ignorant desperado. No scheming villain would employ a man of that kind in a delicate piece of trickery."

"Not if he could get a better tool. But when one can't get a silver fork to eat with, he can use an iron one or even use his fingers in lieu of the last!"

The merchant smiled, the idea was original.

"Now my next and most important question comes. Can you not think of some one who would be mean enough to rob you if he could?"

"Yes, I have an enemy—a bold, unscrupulous fiend, who has already done all he could to ruin me!"

"Do you know where he is?"

"No; he disappeared from New York after doing me every injury in his power—disappeared so completely, the best detectives could not find his trail. They all had one opinion—that he had gone to Europe or Asia with the proceeds of his robberies."

"His name?"

"Lew Mortimer—my former chief and confidential clerk."

Noting down the name, the marshal continued his questions.

"What is this man like? Give me age, height, color of hair and eyes—every distinctive mark you can remember!"

"Age fifty, or thereabout—tall and rather clumsily formed, large hands and feet. Gray eyes—when I last saw him wore no beard of any kind—hair reddish brown with gray streaks coming in it. Rather stooping in habit from sitting so much over a writing-desk. Quick and often nervous in manner!"

All this went into the note book of the marshal.

"One more thought and I have done for to-

night," he said. "You have intended to start for your mines early Monday morning?"

"Yes, long before day dawns."

"Please defer your departure, two or three days and give me time to work up this case!"

"My men are all under wages, my stock to feed—the expense is heavy!" explained the merchant, with a sigh.

"Never mind the expense. You can have all the money you want of me, here and now," said Mr. Hines earnestly. "Let Boyd have his way. He'll work up this mystery—see if he doesn't!"

"I will try!" assented the marshal. "It will take me a little time to thoroughly overhaul the town and the ranches near by, and see who and what is in it. There are many men, strangers to me, in the place, but I'll not be long in finding out their antecedents and their present business. I shall write by the first mail to the Chief of Scotland Yard in London, to make inquiry about Clarence Wilson, who sent him here and what he was sent for, also informing them of his sudden disappearance. It will of course be some time before I can hear from there, as writing is more safe than telegraphing. Operators can be colluded with—sealed letters are generally safe, if official, for mail clerks will not look for money sent in such letters."

"You have a long head, Mr. Boyd!"

"A man in my line needs a clear head, a quick hand and the patience of a sleuth-hound!" was the reply. "But I must be off. You have consented to delay your departure a day or two, Mr. Conrad?"

"Yes, sir, if it is really necessary. But, I want to be on the road. The sooner I am settled down at the mines the more contented I will feel. Once there, with proper precautions I shall fear nothing."

"Well, sir—I hope you will soon be safely there. Travel though is growing more and more dangerous of late. Good-night."

CHAPTER XII.

TRYING TO COVER HIS TRAIL.

"I'll have to put a bullet in the corpus of that city marshal, Bill Boyd—I'm afeard!" declared Pete Parkerton when he entered Number Two a little before midnight.

"Why! has he troubled you?"

"Yes! He bothered me with questions about that Englishman. I set him off and came near havin' a shoot for the same as 'he lie' passed between us. But we thought better of it and I asked him to wet. But he wouldn't drink with me. He has watched me all over town and evidently didn't swallow the taffy I gave him. Twice he has been in at Hines's to see that old Conrad and he has overhauled the way-bill to get the name of the Englishman. Besides he has talked to the passengers and found out that the cockney fool told 'em he was looking for a Mr. Conrad. He didn't tell me that—Bill is sly, but nevertheless I got onto it. If he keeps nosing about me much longer he'll come up missing before long. That's the kind of jewel-block, I am. And now I'll swallow a taste o' Bourbon and go to camp at the corral where most o' my boys stay near the stock. I sha'n't room here while that yaller-livered purp is watchin' o' me, lest he gets his eyes on you. There don't any one around seem to know that a man o' your heft is under this roof and it's best it is so!"

"You're right!" said Raymond. "And the sooner we get away from here the better I think, after we've disposed of that English curse!"

"I don't want to go until after Conrad has pulled out with his party. He goes heavy—two full-loaded wagons and an ambulance, and can't make over thirty miles a day through the sand, while we go flyin' light and can make forty-five or fifty easy. I must know his course so as to know where it is best to lay for him!"

"You are right. But I wish that English fool was out of the way!"

"Why don't you overhaul his bag and see what boodle there is!"

"I will," said Raymond, not daring to hint that he had already gone through it and appropriated the papers.

So the bag was taken from under the rubbish in the closet and opened.

In it only clothing and a bag containing one hundred and sixteen golden sovereigns was found.

"Take the whole of the money, Pete—I have enough of my own!" said Raymond who could well afford to appear generous in this case.

"No, pard—I said halves on the start, and halves it is!" replied Parkerton. "And as I don't care to have English gold on me in case that galoot should double-bank me and try a search, you give me my half in greenbacks or American gold, and keep it all."

Raymond gave him two hundred and ninety dollars in paper money and then advised him to carry off the carpet-bag in the dark and burn it, so that no trace could be found of the missing man's baggage in case of search.

This Parkerton agreed to do, and after taking "a taste"—only a tumblerful of Bourbon—left the room and house, going back out of the town

in the darkness, calculating to go to his camp at the corral by a circuitous route unseen.

In the solitude of his room, Mr. Ol Raymond now pondered over the situation. The more he thought it over the less he liked it. These inquiries after the English agent were too pressing. He wanted, for reasons best known to himself, to be out of that town as soon as he could be—out of it, where he could carry out his nefarious plans in regard to Mr. Conrad and his daughter with less danger to himself. He knew that if he was caught foul there, he had no powerful friend barring Calamity Jane, who would help him, and he was not sure she would, if she knew he was in the wrong.

And he had heard so much of Lynch law, its prompt decisions and its stern sentences from which there is no appeal, that he felt a nameless dread creeping over him. He dared not leave his room, or even show his face at the window.

He feared Wilson might get away from the place to which Parkerton had carried him, and regretted that he had not advised his immediate death and burial, on the principle that a dead man could tell no tales.

He knew that the Englishman, once in contact with Mr. Conrad, would reveal that which would cause him and his daughter to give up all idea of rough life in the mines, and make it necessary, too, for him to leave Tombstone in a hurry, if, indeed, he could get away. And he determined that when Pete Parkerton came again to his room he would give positive orders to put an end to all chance of catastrophe by ending the life of the poor Englishman at once.

Consoling himself with a good supper and a bottle of his favorite beverage, he retired and tried to sleep.

CHAPTER XIII. GORING THE BEAST.

WHEN day fairly came out, and the sun rose, there was sufficient light through the aperture far over the head of Wilson in his cavern prison, for him to see into and study his surroundings.

The part he was in was used as a kind of storehouse for the occupants of the cavern. Quantities of dried meat and barrels of bread, flour and groceries were piled in a dry portion near the pile of skins and blankets which served him as a bed. Above, though he could see light and the branches of green trees, the rocky walls were smooth and perpendicular, and no ladder, even had he possessed one, would have been long enough to reach out.

His jailer, for such the fierce cougar might well be termed, seemed restless and angry, for she paced to and fro, looking at him with fiery eyes, as if she would like to make her morning meal off his trembling form.

He dared not move about as he would have been glad to do to warm his chilled limbs, for at the least stir he made, her ominous growl broke on his ears.

So he wrapped up in a blanket and sat still and silent until his watch told him (for it and his purse were yet upon his person) that nine o'clock was reached.

Then a fierce growl from the cougar woke him from lethargy and he saw the glare of a torch coming through the passageway beyond the animal.

It was borne by the outlaw chief who had brought him there. He also carried a pot of hot coffee and a basket of warm food.

"Down, Sal! Down!" he cried fiercely. "There is a bite for you!"

And he threw down a large hunk of raw meat which the animal sprung upon and devoured eagerly.

Then he passed her in safety and set the coffee and food on a ledge close to where Wilson stood.

"Eat and drink hearty. Your board is paid for!" he said with a grimace meant for a smile.

"Ow long must I stay in this 'orrible place?" asked Wilson, mournfully, though he raised the pot of hot coffee to his lips while waiting an answer.

"Till him as brought you here orders us to let you go! Be thankful it's no worse. We road-agents don't often hold prisoners. We generally make wolf-bait of 'em—send 'em to the better world the gospel men talk about."

"Kill them you mean?"

"Yes, that's about the name of it!"

"Mercy hon me! I've never 'armed hany-body!"

"You don't look as if you had. But that's no reason you're not in somebody's way. Take things easy—as long as we get no orders to put you out of the way, you're as safe here as you'd be in a church. Safer, too—lightning might strike you there, but it never would get down this deep in the bowels of the 'arth!"

"I should think not!" sighed the prisoner.

"Here's grub enough to last you to-day. If you're dry there's water close at hand and a flask of liquor in the basket. In the morning I'll visit you again. To-day, I and my men are going off on a little trip, but we'll be back by night. Don't test Old Sal's temper. You can't pass her and if ever she broke that chain, good-by Mr. Man. She'd crunch every bone in your carcass afore you could say Lord help you!"

"I'll be still. She's just hawful!" said the poor fellow, as the animal gave a fearful growl.

"She's hungry. I keep her so and then she'll keep wide awake and on guard!" said the bandit, laughing.

He now rose and left, and once more Wilson was alone with his terrible sentinel.

Drinking his coffee while it was yet hot, he looked into the basket. It was well-filled with bread, fresh-baked, warm meats and some potatoes that had been roasted in the ashes. A flask of liquor so strong it made him shiver all over, was also there.

He ate some of the bread and meat and threw a piece of the latter to the cougar. The beast swallowed it at a gulp, and seemed to look for more.

"Oh! hif I honly dared! Wouldn't I fill that beast hup so 'twould be friends with me? That man said he was goin' haway, but most like 'twas to fool me, and see if I'd try to hescape. I wouldn't dare try it, by day, hany-way."

He tasted a little of the liquor, diluted with water. It warmed him up for the time, and lightened his spirits. He began to think he might get away. He felt if once beyond the cougar's reach he could creep through the narrow passage and possibly get out unseen. If so, he would travel till he found help.

Looking up overhead at a dried venison ham within his reach, he cut off a liberal slice and threw it to the cougar, to see if that kind of meat would please it.

It was swallowed like the rest, in a second.

"They say wild beasts halways lay torpid—go to sleep when they're gorged," he muttered to himself. "I've 'alf a mind to try it to-night. There's meats enough, I reckon, without it'll swallow more'n its hown weight."

He counted over a dozen large hams hanging where he could get at them. The cougar did not seem so ugly, and did not growl now without he offered to approach it. He was fast making a friend of his jailer.

He amused himself for awhile by cutting off a slice now and then, and throwing it to the extreme length of the cougar's chain, right or left, and watching the animal, who for the moment left an open passageway to a very quick leaper when it went to get the coveted morsel.

"I feel sure I could get by while it was heating an 'ole 'am," he said. "Hand I'll try it this night, the Lord bein' my 'elper!"

All day, eating and drinking sparingly from the flask and spring to give himself strength for the effort, he waited, feeding the beast a little from time to time, to keep it in expectancy.

The more he fed it the more it seemed to want, and it would stand and wag its tail like a great hungry dog after it had swallowed its morsel.

Wilson had no arms. If he had possessed them, he had neither the skill or courage to use them.

Toward night he lay down and slept for an hour or two. When he woke the light was growing dim overhead, and he saw that night would soon be upon him. Again he commenced to feed the cougar, throwing the meat to the full length of its chain to one side, so as to leave an opening to the outer passage. While he could yet see he fixed his course, estimated how many leaps would carry him clear, and then cut down four or five hams with his pocket-knife, intending to throw them all to the point where the animal would not expect them.

Then, when it was gorged he would make the trial. Once beyond its leap, he felt sure he could creep off unseen.

Darkness came on. Ham after ham was cast down before the ravenous beast. Crunch! Crunch! he could hear its jaws at work, and now and then a cat-like purr of satisfaction.

He waited as long as he dared, and still it was eating, but seemed not so voraciously.

"Now or never!" he gasped. "The houthlaw would kill me hanyway for wasting his meat, and I must go!"

He drew a long breath and leaped forward.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LIFE AND DEATH RACE.

ONE, two, three, up to five long leaps, the distance he had calculated, and Wilson struck the further wall with a force that nearly knocked the senses out of him.

"Safe from the tiger!" he gasped, for it had not even uttered a growl. He could hear it still crunching away at the meat.

Trembling with excitement he took a draught from the flask which he had brought along. It was raw and fearfully strong—it almost choked him, but it put life into his limbs and he groped on, feeling his way slowly in the darkness by keeping one hand on the rocky wall.

It seemed a long distance and to have many crooks and turns, but at last he saw the glimmer of light ahead and heard voices.

Full of fear, he crept slowly on, until hidden in darkness himself, he crouched in a crevice between the walls in sight of the men who were talking loudly around their fire while they ate and drank.

They seemed to have just come in from a ride.

Their arms were belted on and their spurs were at their heels.

Loudest among the voices poor Wilson recognized that of the outlaw leader and soon to his horror found that he was talking of him.

This, was what he heard.

"I'm sorry we've got to kill that poor devil of an Englishman! But he has got to die. I have one hundred sovereigns of British gold in my pocket to pay for it and it goes into our common treasury. He is in the way of Pete Parkerton's employer and holds some secret of his. It has got to go under with him!"

The intended victim trembled and his heart beat so loud and fast, it seemed to him some of them must hear him.

He raised his flask and drank a deep, deep draught or he would have sunk to the ground and fainted.

"You'll not bother with him afore morning, will you?" asked one of the men. "He's safe with Old Sal on guard!"

"He must die to-night, when I'm done supper," declared Jones. "I promised Pete not to put it off and you all know my promise is as good as my oath! And I want witnesses. So any of you that want a hand in or want to see the fun can come along!"

"Not much fun in shooting an unarmed man that has no fight in him!" growled one of the men. "I'm tired and shall hug my blanket for my share of the fun!"

"Me too!" said another.

But others, ever ready for such an act of cruelty were ready to go with the leader and soon as supper was over a half-dozen torches were lighted and the men got ready to go inside.

Poor Wilson crouched low in the crevice, breathless in his fear of being seen.

They all passed him, the leader with a pistol in one hand and a torch in the other.

The moment they were out of sight Wilson knew his only chance for life and liberty, slim as it was, had come. Only two men seemed to be between him and the open mouth of the cavern. Both had lighted their pipes and laid down on blankets near the fire.

Stealthy and still he strode on till almost up to them unseen, then he leaped madly forward and bounded out into the open air before either man was on his feet or could draw a weapon to fire on him.

Once out he thought they could not see to shoot him. But he ran into a new peril before he knew it was before him. Crouched around a little fire a small party of Indians sat and smoked.

He almost ran over them, but in a second, like a flash, he was out in the darkness. Shouts, yells and gun-shots reached his ears. But they were behind him, and he ran on with a speed he never had known before. Time after time he fell but rose and ran on. His hands and knees were pierced with the cruel thorns of cactus over which he fell, but he heeded not the pain. When he felt as if he must fall and give out, he put the flask to his lips, got breath and ran again.

Soon he heard a party of horsemen riding furiously behind him. He had run into a clump of sage-brush in the darkness. He crawled in under the bushes and the horsemen went by not a pistol-shot away. He heard them shout:

"He has gone for Tombstone; we'll catch him before he gets there!"

That gave him a course. Taking a star for a guide, he tried to follow the direction the mounted men had taken. He could hear them ahead, an occasional shout and yell in his rear.

On—he ran with all his might. It would never do for him to be out on the plains when daylight broke.

On—on—falling from weakness every little while, but finding strength in momentary rest and a pull at the flask he struggled forward.

He began to hope. He felt almost sure he saw lights ahead, though distant. At first he feared he saw stars, then when he paused to get breath he heard as he thought the lowing of cattle. And he was sure that far, far ahead he saw the blaze of a fire.

Forward, still forward till his knees again gave way and he fell from exhaustion. He drained his flask. It was a long, strong drink, but it was all and he threw the now useless flask away.

The fiery liquor coursed through his veins, he got up and staggered on. The lights grew plainer and plainer.

"It is the town—I will be saved!" he cried. "I will be saved!"

He could not run now—only a slow walk on thorn-pierced and blistered feet and he knew the night was passing fast. Yet he hoped. He had heard a horse neigh! Whether owned by friend or foe he could not tell.

On—slower and slower, but still he headed toward the lights.

Now came a sound which made his heart sick with dread. It was behind him. It came at first faint and low, but it grew in volume as he reeled along. It was the bay of a dog and yells from human voices seemed to encourage it!

"They're 'unting me with an 'ound!" he groaned. "I'm lost, I'm lost!"

Fear drove him to renewed exertion. He ran

again. But it was only a faint struggle. Nearer and nearer came the terrible sounds.

The lights seemed yet a mile away, the eastern star had just risen over the horizon, and he knew the dog was close to him. Again he ran until he felt he could go no further. He heard the bay of the pursuing hound close upon him. He heard a fierce, exultant yell. He stopped, and in desperation drew and opened the blade of his pocket-knife.

A minute later the panting dog was up to him—his left arm in its jaws.

Furiously he drove his knife in the beast's throat with his right hand again and again, and then with a moan of helpless agony, sunk with the dying dog to the ground, the blood of both flowing out on the thirsty sand.

It was a mercy that all consciousness was gone when he fell.

CHAPTER XV.

THE ROGUES' ALARM.

It was near daylight when Parkerton came creeping up to the door of Number Two, and aroused Ol Raymond as quietly as he could.

The latter rose and let him in, lighting his lamp so he could dress.

"What is the matter? Why have you left camp so early?" cried the man from the East.

"Matter enough! An hour ago one of Jones's men came in to tell me that the English agent had escaped."

"Escaped?" gasped Raymond, turning whiter than the sheets on his bed.

"Yes—early last night. He gorged the cougar that was chained across his path—gorged it with dried meat till it lay almost torpid, and let him pass. He was less a fool than we took him to be."

"Has he reached town yet?"

"No. He never will. Jones has a line of men spread all across the country between his cave and town. Before he left in pursuit he ordered the Indians with him to put a bloodhound on the trail. He never can get in alive. The order is to kill him on sight."

"For all that he may escape. A fatality for good or ill attends most men. I shall not draw an easy breath until I know he is dead."

"Neither will I. For I am in most danger. He was last seen with me. If he should get to a place of safety and expose us, our cake is all dough. You know that as well as I."

"Yes," sighed Raymond. "And if Conrad once interviews him—he will go no further, and every plan must change. It will be next to impossible to stop him, if he starts East, for his past experience will cause him to take an armed escort, and to be on the lookout for attack. Ahead, he might move with less fear, if he does not catch on to our little game."

"Well, I must get out and be on the watch for news. I smell coffee below. Order up some, for the bar is closed, and I see your Bourbon is out."

The coffee and breakfast were ordered, eaten, and then Pete Parkerton hurried off to gather news if he could.

By this time the sun was up, and business people were moving around. Only those who had made a "night of it" in the saloons and gambling-dens were now stowed away out of sight.

For two or three hours Raymond waited in suspense for the return and report of the man Parkerton.

Then he had an unexpected visitor. It was Calamity Jane. Her face wore a strangely anxious look. Usually it was calm and placid, even with excitement all around her.

"Mr. Raymond," said she, "I fear this fellow, Parkerton, will get you into trouble. That is if it becomes known you and he are in any partnership, or that he is in your employment. So far, I have given no hint of it, nor even allowed it to go beyond two of my faithful servants that this room is occupied."

"You have been very kind," he said, gently. "I wish I could compensate you."

"Poh! I don't do this for gain. Some way, I hardly know why, I take an interest in you. You've trusted me, and I'll stick by you till the hot place freezes over. I have startling news for you."

"Startling news? Do not then keep me in suspense. Let me hear it at once."

"The body of our Englishman, who came in the stage two days ago, and who was last seen alive in the company of Pete Parkerton, was found at daylight by a rancher, yet warm. A dead dog with his teeth set in the poor fellow's arm was found under him; he had evidently killed it while it was holding him. But the cause of his death was an Indian arrow. He had been shot in the back, and the arrow literally pinned him to the ground. His scalp was taken, and he had been robbed of whatever he had on his person. Not even a scrap of paper was found on him. The rancher rode to town, and the marshal, Bill Boyd, and the coroner, went out and brought the body in. On the man's underclothing, his name, Clarence Wilson, was marked."

"Strange! Where could the man have been all this time? You say it is three days since he came!"

"Two days, I said. The theory of the marshal is that he has been confined somewhere, escaped, tracked down by a bloodhound and Indians, and killed!"

"Horrible! But Parkerton could have had nothing to do with this. He has been in town all the time, staying each night at his camp near the corral in the edge of the town, or so he reports."

"Yes; he told the marshal so and brought men to prove it. There is a strange mystery somewhere. Parkerton said, while looking at the body, that it was *not* the man who came in the stage, though it looked like him. That man went out the same night with a prospecting party, is his story. But the name on the underclothes is the same as the stage passenger gave when it was entered on the way-bill."

"It is a mystery!" repeated Raymond, in a tone of innocent wonder. "If Indians kill and scalp a man so close to town, who is safe?"

"No one that rides beyond the limits. But I must go. Remember, if you see a sign of trouble, send for me instantly. I like you and I'll stand by you. A note sent below, simply signed 'Number Two,' will bring me to your room night or day."

"From my heart I thank you. If there is any further news, or Parkerton is put under arrest, please let me know."

"I will, without delay."

She was gone.

"If I had good sense I'd take up with this woman, put my capital with hers, and be content with life here and what I could make," said Raymond to himself. "But I am mad in my passion for that girl, Magdalena Conrad. I have sworn to possess her, and now that an immense fortune can be had with her, only death shall change my plans. But I'll make all the use I can of the friendship offered by Calamity Jane. It will be useful, to say the least of it. I could make the woman love me if I tried. Magdalena Conrad is the only woman who ever turned the cold shoulder on me when I tried to win her favor."

An hour later Pete Parkerton came in. He was pale and nervous.

"I've been *corraled*!" he muttered. "I've had a close call. Send for a bottle of Bourbon. I'm dryer than a dead cottonwood."

The liquor came up. He drank three glasses without stopping.

"Hold on!" cried Raymond. "You'll drink yourself crazy!"

"I'll go crazy sooner without it. I begin to feel like myself once more," growled the man, stolidly. "Don't you see—not a nerve shakes now! And I can talk—tell you what I've gone through. That cursed marshal had me up, and he and the coroner and Lem Hines—cuss him for stickin' his nose in the muzz!—criss-crossed me with questions till I got that mad I cried! I'd have done some shootin' as well as cussin' if the consarned Vigilantes hadn't been there with six-shooters in their belts and a lariat awful handy!"

"Where is the marshal now?"

"Gone off with a posse on the Santa Fe trail to see if he can find the man I swore went on ahead of me—my 'backer' you know. Afore he left he ordered me not to leave town—if I did I was to be shot on sight. I'm to stay till he gets back—or them's the orders. He wants to catch me in the lie. But he'll not find me when he wants to, or if he does, he'll find me holding the drop on him!"

"How long will he be gone?"

"If he keeps on till he finds my man, he'll never come back. But if he only goes to the White Springs where I told him he'd be like to find my advance party, he'll be gone three days, if he moves lively!"

"Then we must leave before he gets back!"

"We ought to. But this man Conrad holds back now, for some reason. His crowd and fit-out are all ready for the road; he was to have pulled out to-day at the latest, yet he stays and makes no sign of a start!"

"What of it? We can go on and wait for him on the route a hundred miles away, can't we?"

"We could if we knew which route he'd take. There are three courses for him. One is a round-about trail with plenty of grass, wood and water on it—but nearly double the distance of either of the others. The shortest route of all is the hardest—yet he might take it!"

Raymond was annoyed. He was sick of inaction. He wanted to be on the move so his plans might culminate. He was rapidly decreasing his capital and when his funds were gone he would be next thing to powerless.

"We will wait one day more!" he said. "Then if Conrad does not go, we will go far enough to be out of reach of your particular friend Boyd, and depend on spies to learn which way the old merchant and his daughter head when they do pull out!"

"All right, boss. I'll keep my mates ready. But it's hard work. You think I'm a drinker! You should see some of them! They can go better than me all day and stand up under it too. Some folks are copper-lined throughout. I wish I was that way!"

Parkerton sighed as he filled and emptied another glass of the raw stuff.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE EVIL EYE.

THE discovery of the body of the supposed Englishman who had said in the stage he was in search of a Mr. Ovid Conrad, was an additional and perplexing mystery. Who could want to destroy him and what for?

Mr. Conrad wanted to go on to his mines. His outfit was ready. Delay only added to his expenses. But Boyd insisted he would get at the bottom of the mystery if he would only delay. Yet the marshal made no headway. He had hunted the town over and had not discovered any mysterious strangers hanging about saloons or boarding-houses. Only the old rounders and the toughs who came in from outside points from time to time. Not a man resembling in any way the description that Mr. Conrad had given of his inveterate foe.

Magdalena too grew nervous with delay. She felt as if her father would be more safe at his mines with faithful employees about him. And they would feel so much more independent. Mr. and Mrs. Hines were kindness personified it is true—but the Conrads hated to enjoy hospitality they were not allowed to pay for.

In the mother of Tombstone Dick Magdalena found a sad silent woman, but one used to all kinds of woman work and a gentle, ever pleasant spoken woman when she did talk.

An early grief had marred the brightness of her life—deserted by the husband who had won her away from school to leave her within a year had clouded all her after days. True her idolized son had been born, had grown up into a noble manhood reared and educated solely by her, but his nature, though all love and reverence for her was strange and wild.

The Indian in his nature prompted him to a love for a wild rough life—he was happiest on the plains or in the mountain wilderness and but for his mother and her comfort would have remained there all his life.

Since his engagement with Mr. Conrad, and consequent closer connection with refined people, he seemed more quiet and subdued and less given to wandering off alone, and his mother rejoiced to see it. Her early education had caused her to love the ways and the comforts of the white race.

Mr. Conrad and Mr. Hines saw the murdered Englishman buried, after the coroner's jury had decided he had been bit by a dog and shot to death with an arrow by some prowling red-skin, and then returned to hold a consultation with Tombstone Dick in regard to future action.

Mr. Hines, her guest Magdalena, and Dick's mother, were present, and as Hines said—there was a full board of directors in council.

"Every day we stay is a loss to me!" declared Mr. Conrad, impatiently.

"Then, why not go on? The outfit is ready to move within an hour!" announced his guide and wagon-master.

"Yes!" added Magdalena, "let us be on our way. I want to get settled in my new home. We are only a trouble to our good friends here!"

"We'd like to have you trouble us, then, for a year to come!" protested Mrs. Hines.

And Mr. Hines echoed the thought.

But Mr. Conrad was firm, and the result of the conference was that the trainmen were to be notified to pull out as early as possible, next morning.

This was done speedily by Tombstone Dick, and as the men he had were steady and reliable he knew there would be no hitch in getting off.

Already he had decided on his route, but no one, not even Mr. Conrad, knew which one he would take. The merchant left it all to him, depending on his judgment, his honesty and his skill to carry him safely through.

Dick chose the longest trail. First because game would be found all along that route. Wood, water and feed for his stock, too, though he carried grain enough to keep the animals in good heart. Last, but not least, though there would be many points where dangerous ambuscades could be laid, he would always make camp in a good defensible position, which he could not do on the open plain.

Like most of his race, silent and reserved, he kept all this to himself, determined to reveal it to his companions only when an explanation became necessary.

Thus it was that Parkerton, keen and watchful though he was, could get no idea of the route Mr. Conrad's train would take nor of the date when they intended to pull out.

Now that departure was decided on, Magdalena felt relieved, and in company with Dick's mother, Mrs. Hartman, as all called her, and Mrs. Hines, went to packing up their trunks and last boxes for the journey.

In packing, Magdalena thought of several little things she needed and she hurried out alone to a store near by to purchase them.

Little did she dream as she hurried on, her pretty face flushed with hope, of a pair of gleaming eyes peering out from behind a curtain, gloating over her dainty form, and of a black heart aching for the moment when the owner could hold her a helpless captive in his power!

Though he dared not show himself there, or

meet her on the street, Ol Raymond gloried in being so close to his intended victim!

"She has grown more and more beautiful since I saw her last!" he confessed. "Misfortune has aged her father wonderfully, but she looks all the brighter for it!"

He had seen Mr. Conrad several times when he passed that window in company with Mr. Hines. But he dared not go face to face and meet him. He was well aware that under another name he stood indicted in the East, and no matter where recognized in the limits of the United States he would be arrested.

Hence one great desire to get rid of the one man who would not fail to see him punished if once he could get him within the law.

CHAPTER XVII.

LAYING THEIR PLANS.

KNOWING he was kept under surveillance by order of Marshal Boyd, Pete Parkerton, desperado though he was, feared to attempt just then to leave the town, lest the organized Vigilantes should take him in hand. He had but a brief interview with the outlaw sent to him by Jones to announce the escape of Wilson, and he desired much to see Jones in person, to know the facts, also to engage his band to swell the number of Raymond's adherents in future work. For he had no doubt the way Boyd was acting, that Conrad's force would be reinforced from the town on symptoms of danger.

Going back to his corral camp after visiting Number Two, as described in a previous chapter, and entering the tent he had put up for his own use, he was surprised but pleased to find Jones there, disguised as a cowboy and apparently pretty "full." But in reality as "sober as a judge" is supposed to be.

"You've heard the news about Wilson haven't you?" was Pete's first inquiry.

"I reckon I did as soon or sooner than you, since Toomah, one of my Indians, brought me his scalp and got fifty dollars for it besides the stealing from the body!"

"How did he ever get away?"

"He made friends with Old Sal by feeding her with my meat—got her stupid full—so gorged that you couldn't kick her up, and walked right past her. He was hid somewhere in the passageway when I went in with some of the boys, to put a bullet in his head, and after I passed with them he made a rush for liberty and got outside almost unseen. The minute I found he was gone, I sent one man to you and started the whole band, Indians and all, to cut him off if he tried to reach the town. He hadn't sense enough to take a horse though he run right past the corral. Toomah had a hound. When that took the trail I knew the fool was our meat, and so it proved.

"He made a big run for his life and had he not got run down and used up, would have got into town in spite of us. I was right glad when the Indian brought back proofs that he was dead and that before he could do you any hurt. I was that mad with Old Sal when I found she'd forgot her duty, I shot her dead on the spot. And she was better than any man to keep guard over my store-room. The whisky was safe in there when she was kept as she always was before half wild with hunger. I never gave her a quarter what she could eat, and that kept her fierce. As I fed her myself, I could manage her when none of my men dared to try to pass her without I was there!"

"It is a pity you killed her—she might have been of use yet. Your man told you I wanted to see you bad?"

"Yes—what for?"

"When you see, at sunrise, wet grass smoke raised here, I want you to pull out with as many well-mounted men as you can spare and join me on a trip where we'll make big pay, sure!"

"Well, I'd like to make a strike. Business has been dull lately. My shoulder begins to heal, too. Why don't you come out and let the boys know what's up?"

"Can't. I'm on the limits of the town—warned to stay here or be shot!"

"Pete Parkerton, are you getting thin-skinned? You did not fear man or devil in the old times. Who scares you now?"

"It's Bill Boyd. He is marshal, and the hardest man the toughs ever had to deal with. He is ten times worse than Hikok, Wild Bill, ever was—quick on the shoot, and twenty men can't back him down if he goes in to pull. He is the first man I ever met whom I wasn't willin' to tackle on sight."

"Bah! He is only a man! If ever I take him in hand I'll prove it."

"Take my advice and let him alone. I had the drop on him twice—the first time my pistol snapped. The next time I had a bead on his heart and I shot. He laughed in my face and the ball bounded back and fell on the floor at my feet. He is more than mortal—that's why I fear him!"

"A steel breast-plate under his shirt, you fool. I've seen 'em. The next time you get the drop let him have it in the eye. He'll be immortal then in ten seconds."

"I never thought o' that!" said Pete. "When are you going back?"

"In an hour or two after I've looked through town. Is your Bill Boyd around where I can see him handy? I laid out the marshal afore him, you know."

"Boyd is off on a trip—a wild-goose chase I sent him on. I'm going to slide, limits or no limits before he comes in. He'll rave when he knows how I've fooled him."

The two now went out, mounted their bronchos and rode up-town. Jones wore green goggles, such as are often used on the sandy plains where sore eyes are common.

As both rode quietly on and seemed sober they attracted no special attention, though Pete felt uneasy. Leaving their animals near the saloon of Calamity Jane, both men went in and drank lightly once or twice, then, wishing to give both Raymond and Jones a surprise, Pete took the latter around by the back stairs and ascended to Number Two.

When his signal knock was heard, Raymond, who had been reading an Eastern paper, rose and opened the door.

"Thunder! I didn't look to see you here!" snarled Jones, in surprise, but he extended his hand.

Raymond took it and said, in a pleasant way: "You hadn't forgotten me! How is your shoulder?"

"None too well, but better than it was when you saw me last. So it is you Pete is working for! I hope he'll have better luck than I did!"

"I hope you are to join us in a continuation of our work. I'm not through with that job yet. You know I'm good pay and keep my word!"

"That's so, boss. But things are getting hazy around here. Even Pete here is scared of the new marshal and the Vigilantes!"

"Therefore, we'll seek pastures new. Our work will be put in at least a couple of hundred miles from here!"

"All right. I've as much as told Pete I'd go!"

"Will you sit down and let me order up something to take?"

"No, thank you, boss! As soon as it darkens I've got to slide for my quarters or the boys will be in lookin' for me. They're not used to my bein' off alone as I am to-day and if they didn't find me, there'd be howlin', you bet!"

So Pete and his friend departed.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A STRANGE FEAST AND AN UNPLEASANT DISCOVERY.

As soon as he was alone again, Ol Raymond, who had decided to get out of Tombstone before Marshal Boyd returned, no matter if he only went forty or fifty miles away, so as to be out of immediate danger of discovery and arrest, sent a note down to Calamity Jane marked "personal and special." In it he asked her to come to his room to see him on business at her earliest leisure.

Within twenty minutes she was there, a look of anxiety on her expressive face.

"Are you in trouble?" she asked.

"No, not yet, nor do I expect any immediately. But I have made up my mind to pull out at once on the speculation I have in hand! I shall go inside of twenty-four hours—probably make a start to-morrow night. I do not want my route known and followed. If I succeed, you will see me again. If I fail, death alone will defeat me. You have my money and the Wells-Fargo draft?"

"Yes—here, where I keep most of my valuable papers and large money!"

She drew a pocket-book from inside the bosom of her dress.

"I will indorse the draft over to you so you can draw the money. Get it in greenbacks or silver and gold certificates, so I can use it. I shall take all but ten thousand dollars with me. That I will leave with you as a nest-egg for me to fall back on if I return broke. If I do not come back, it is yours, for no one else will ever claim it!"

"I don't like to hear you talk that way. You'll come back rich, I hope—very rich!"

"I hope so, too; but if worse luck comes, I'll meet it like a man!"

"I believe you. Put your name on the draft, and I'll get the money. I see it is payable to O. Raymond."

"Yes; that is the name I use now. If success is mine, you shall yet know my real name."

"All right—when it pleases you. I am not curious, as women are generally supposed to be. I have secrets enough of my own without sharing those of others."

The indorsement was made, and half an hour later Raymond had all his money on his person except ten one-thousand-dollar notes. He had also notified Pete Parkerton that no matter what happened he would leave the town by the next evening and get away from annoyance. Pete was to make no show, only to have men, arms, stores, animals all ready.

"We can keep a spy or two on Conrad's movements," suggested his employer. "I feel uneasy here, and want to go into camp somewhere on our route where I can feel safe."

"That's me all over, boss!" echoed Pete. "Since that cuss of an Englishman went under,

I've felt as though I had a rope around my neck, though neither you or I put him out of the way. And I don't like Bill Boyd. He's one of the old Pinkerton gang, and what them chaps don't know isn't worth knowing. I wish I had him once more under the nose of my six-shooter. I think I wouldn't shoot quite so low down as I did once when him and me had a spat."

"I hope we'll be a good day's ride from here before he gets back. He'll not follow us."

"Not without he sees big pay in it. Most of such chaps work for what they can make. I never knew but one town marshal in the West who put in his work just for glory and the fun of it. That was Wild Bill. He was the boss marshal of the whole wide West."

"So I've heard. I never saw him. Now, to your work, Pete, and keep steady."

"As a rock, boss. I know when to do it. Bet your dear life on that. And now I've something more to tell you. Your Mr. Conrad is going to pull out, and that soon. His head man, Tombstone Dick, keeps a close mouth; he hasn't opened his thin lips about it. But I can read signs worse than any fortune-teller that ever squinted over a pack o' cards. He has overhauled all his harness and wagon-gear to-day. Seen to his loads, too. They were in Hines's corral, but I had a fellow squinting at the job. And he is going by the long route too."

"How do you know that?"

"He hasn't carried no water-casks along, as he'd have to if he went over the dry plains. He means to camp at wood-and-water points every night."

"And you?"

"We'll cut across and head him off. I'd as soon he'd have four days' start of us as not. He'll see no sign of danger, and get kind o' careless if we're not near him in four or five, or maybe six or seven days. Then we can catch him napping, smart as he thinks he is."

"It looks so. You are a long-headed fellow, Pete."

"That's what dad used to say of me, when I was a kid. I never had a mother that I can remember. If I'd had one, maybe I wouldn't have grown up so tough. But I must be off; I've a heap o' work on hand, and to do it quiet, mustn't seem to be at it at all. You'll see me again after dark."

Pete seemed to be a different man, now that prompt action was required of him. He didn't call for his usual "taste o' Bourbon," his face brightened as if his brain was clearing up, and he was calling in his reserve of nerve force and manhood.

Men are singular animals. They often are not men at all till necessity calls their better powers into play.

It was near the hour when Raymond usually ordered dinner. But he had been too much occupied to think of it.

Suddenly he heard the tinkle of the bell attached to his dumb-waiter. And to his surprise it came up loaded with an unusually fine array of dishes.

"Plates for two. It seems as if I'm to have company," he said, as he removed the contents of the waiter to his table and saw it go down again.

"Soup, fish—a better brand of wine, Dry Mumm. Why this is like Delmonico. French rolls, new butter; better and better."

A gentle, but already well-known knock at his door told him who the second plate was for.

"I felt lonesome, and thought I'd dine with you," explained Calamity Jane as she entered.

"It rather seems to me I'm to dine with you, since you have chosen the dishes and the wine," he answered.

She smiled.

"Do you like the first course?"

"Exceedingly! The soup appears delicious, and the fish is a rarity. Dry Mumm, too! I did not know there was any in this house!"

"It came from my private cellar over the way. When the meats and game come up, you shall taste the finest Burgundy that ever came to Arizona. Sit right down while everything is warm. I almost always dine alone; it is a treat to have pleasant company."

"Thank you again. You are bound to overwhelm me with kindness."

"I am not often kind," she returned. "The life I have led these long, long years, has hardened my heart. I look on man generally as a tigress would look on a destined victim. Of my own sex I never make a friend. I have found women as a general thing, vain, fickle, jealous and treacherous. And so I look out for them, and make all around me know their places. In servants, I am fortunate. I have but few, but I treat them well, and loving me, they are faithful. I have but to name a wish, it is fulfilled; to give an order, it is obeyed!"

"You should be happy."

"Happiness? There is no such thing. I take events as they come, and try to be content."

"That is sound philosophy! It is as good as happiness, as the latter is generally defined."

The first course passed, there came a delicious change. The confidential servant, a Mexican woman, came up to move the dishes.

Broiled grouse, young and tender, loin steak from antelope—a rare roast of delicious beef,

with every vegetable the climate afforded, and the old Burgundy she had told him about.

It seemed to Raymond as if he had never enjoyed a meal so much. And his companion, using none but refined language, told him stories of her Western life, of the early days in Cheyenne, Denver, Deadwood and elsewhere that filled his mind with wonder that she yet lived and was there. She was a living history in herself of the young West, and knew every noted character that had made a mark in that history.

She had been a friend to Wild Bill, when friends were needed; she had broken the arm of a ruffian who held the drop on Buffalo Bill, by a well-directed shot from her own ready pistol; she had checked the gallant Custer, when, excited with wine, he would have played away his last dollar, and had returned his losses, because she honored him as a man and a soldier—for hours over the table, she kept her guest wondering more and more over what he heard.

Then came dessert and coffee, and the lamps were alight when the feast was over, and she had to get ready to stand at her faro-bank and rake in her nightly spoils. Then she was gone.

"If my every hope, thought and wild passion were not centered on Magdalena Conrad, I would yield myself to the siren influence of this wonderful woman!" said Raymond, as he sat near the now empty table and pondered over the enjoyment of that afternoon.

An hour after dark, Parkerton made his promised appearance.

"Things are booming, boss!" he announced. "I saw Jones before he started back. Two days out he'll join us with ten good white men, who know every trail in the country!"

"Good! How many men have you?"

"Twenty—all told, counting you and me!"

"And Conrad's party?"

"Twelve men and two women—Tombstone Dick's mother goes as companion to the girl—a kind of upper servant!"

"Why we double—yes trouble their force!"

"Yes, boss—but we haven't any such men as there is in that party! There isn't a rumsucker among 'em. All sober, resolute, hard-workin' fellows, good shots and men that'll stand up to the manger, fodder or no fodder, till they die! I hate to say it, but every single man in that crowd is worth two like me. It's the honest truth. And I'm on my good behavior now, and mean to keep there while you put me at the head of the boys!"

"I'm glad to hear it, Pete. And I assure you if we get through all right, you'll not be sorry. I have plenty of money and you shall be royally paid!"

"I know it, boss. I'll stick—bet your dear life on that!"

Parkerton now left, to go to his corral, and Raymond sat for a long time musing over what Calamity Jane had told him, and listening to the music of the orchestra in the saloon below.

A last he retired—to sleep and dream, for he was a man of many dreams. He passed a restless night. Thoughts of Magdalena crowded into his dreams and woke him earlier than usual. He knew it was near the dawn of day, for all was still in the saloon underneath. The night-birds had gone to roost.

He rose, dressed, and going to the window, raised the curtain and looked out on the deserted street. The morning air was gratefully cool to his feverish brow. It was broad daylight.

Suddenly an ambulance drawn by four mules, skillfully driven, came up the street, heading south.

The animals, well in hand, swept forward at a steady trot. The front curtains of the vehicle were rolled up, showing the driver on his seat and others behind him.

"It is some government team, out this early," thought Raymond.

Yet neither the driver nor the man who sat beside him was in uniform.

Suddenly Raymond, who had not thought of his own exposure, heard his own real name uttered in a wild shriek—saw a white face looking up full at him, and her finger pointing toward him as the name left her lips.

"Magdalena Conrad—and she has seen me! Fool that I am to show myself now!" he cried, as he drew back and, too late, dropped the curtain before him.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE WRONG MAN.

"FATHER—my father, did you see that man?" cried Magdalena, as she turned to her father, who was seated by her side.

"I got but a glimpse," he answered, "but that glance told me my deadliest enemy is in this town!"

"Shall we not stop, go back and have him arrested?"

"It is too late. He has seen that he was known, heard your cry of recognition. He will not wait for arrest. Besides, our guide with the wagons and stores is on the way, and two hours ahead of us now. He expects us to overtake him by noon, and our driver must not delay. I will do the best I can. I will write a note to Marshal Boyd, telling of our discovery, and give it to the first man I meet to take to his office, where he will get it when he returns."

Magdalena trembled with nervous fear.

"I now realize the cause of our escape, when all others on the stage were shot!" she said. "I heard a man shout then: 'Don't hit the woman—don't hurt her!' That villain instigated that attack, and their intention was to capture me!"

"It looks as if that was the case!" said Mr. Conrad. "For when I drove him away from my house, scorning his pretensions for your hand, he swore a fearful oath that he would have you, and no earthly power should prevent it!"

"He never will!" said Magdalena. "I fear he has been hovering near us ever since we started, plotting some treacherous act!"

"I think if so, we have the start of him now, for by his look I could see he was taken by surprise!" said the merchant.

Seeing a man coming toward them from the camps outside of town, Mr. Conrad told his driver to stop a moment and when he did so wrote a hurried note on a blank leaf of a memorandum book. This he inclosed in an envelope he had in the book, and directed it to "Mr. Wm. Boyd, Marshal of Tombstone—special and in haste."

Calling to the man whose horse was nearly up to them now, Mr. Conrad handed him the letter and a silver dollar.

"Friend," said he, "the dollar is for yourself. Will you be sure when you ride into town to leave this note at the office of the town marshal for me!"

"Sart'in! And I don't want no dollar for doin' so little as that!" said the man, bluntly, taking the letter, but refusing the money.

"Well—I cannot force it on you, but you have my grateful thanks for the service!"

"All right, boss—good-mornin'!"

And the man touched his broncho with his spurred heel and galloped on.

It was not very likely Marshal Boyd would ever see that note. The man thus early riding into town was Pete Parkerton on his way to Number Two. Conrad did not know him.

In less than five minutes, while the ambulance containing the merchant and his daughter, with driver, guard and Tombstone Dick's mother was speeding away, Pete stood in the presence of his employer, with that note in his hand.

Raymond was pale and shaking with agitation. He had just ordered up a pot of coffee with which to steady his nerves.

"Boss—here is a letter I got a bit ago—it isn't for you, but it may be worth lookin' at!"

"For the marshal, and in Conrad's well-known hand-writing!" said Raymond the instant he had it in his hand.

"Yes—the old cuss was writing it when I met him and he offered me a dollar to bring it in and leave it at Bill's office. I refused the dollar but took the letter and his thanks. Isn't that gal of his a stunner!"

"So, you met the ambulance! Well, they've seen and recognized me, so they know now I'm on their trail!"

"Yes—and they'll be on a sharper lookout after this too. It's a bad bit o' luck. But aren't you goin' to see what is in that letter?"

Raymond tore it open and read its contents aloud.

"DEAR MR. BOYD:—

"The villain you were warned about and of whom you have a full description, is quartered in a room over the saloon of the woman known as Calamity Jane. My daughter and myself both saw him and he also recognized us this morning when we started on our journey. As you know, there are three indictments against him for arson, theft and forgery. Arrest and hold him and send word to Chief Byrnes, Central Police office, New York city. Yours in haste, OVID CONRAD."

"Why, boss! I'd no idea you was a first-class crook! Three indictments all at once! You're a high cockalorum, you are."

And Pete Parkerton looked, as he expressed, a genuine admiration for a man so far advanced in crime.

"So—this Bill Boyd has a full description of me," muttered Raymond. "Pete, you've made the luckiest hit of your life in getting hold of this note. Do you think Conrad went right on, continuing his trip to the mines?"

"Yes, boss. His train pulled out at three o'clock, and went by my camp. Tombstone Dick was riding ahead of the wagons. I was on my way to tell you of it, when I met the ambulance."

"Good. We also must be off too, for this is a dangerous locality for me. Outside, with you and a band of brave fellows at my back, I fear nothing."

"If we're not watched too close by Bill's deputies, we'll have no trouble in startin'," said Pete. "My men are all as sober as I can keep 'em!"

Make up a plan to send the deputies out of the way. Can't you think of some story—robbers hid near the stage track? How would that do?"

"Bully! You're just king on makin' up a lie. You'll give me ten in a game and lead all the time. I'll send a cowboy friend o' mine out, and let him run from the east, scared half to death, tellin' how he run on a nest o' toughs hid in the bush."

"Right; and while they're off we'll start and make good time."

"All right; be ready in two hours, boss. Your horse will be at the foot of the stairs, back of the house, and a mounted man with it. Trust to him, and ride out of town by the course he takes."

"All right. I will be ready."

Pete hurried off, while Raymond, lighting a match, burned the note written by Conrad. Then he sat down and wrote a long letter to Calamity Jane, excusing his sudden departure, and asking her to hold him in kind remembrance until she saw him again. He had bitter enemies, he said, who had persecuted him in the East, and they were on his track here, so he would go on to the mines and try to add to his means, so as to be ready to combat those who sought to destroy him. He inclosed a large bank-note to cover his bill, and asked her, if questioned, to exhibit no concern, and to say he had simply hired a lodging-room for a few days, had paid his bill and gone, she knew not where.

This note written, sealed and directed, he looked carefully to his weapons, a repeating rifle and two revolvers, and packing one side of his saddle-bags with ammunition and a case of medicines, he put some rough, serviceable clothing and a couple of flasks of liquor, for use in case of exhaustion or illness, in the other.

He was ready. All but taking one good, hearty meal, and the last bottle of Heidsieck he expected to see for many a day.

He waited the two hours named, and going to the rear door, saw his horse led up by a man who seemed to be a cowboy in full rig, who rode a fiery broncho, with an ease and grace which proved he had been long used to the saddle.

In a moment, throwing on his saddle-bags, he was mounted and off.

CHAPTER XX.

A PROFITLESS RIDE.

DRIVING on steadily on a well defined trail Mr. Conrad's ambulance reached the water and feeding ground which Tombstone Dick had selected for a noon rest, just as the latter had caused his teams to be turned loose for a two hours' nooning.

Small fires were alight and coffee made for all hands, a cold lunch disposed of and now Mr. Conrad had a good chance to see and admire the class of men Dick had picked out for guards, hunters and teamsters, as well as to see the regular order in which all worked.

The men were mostly young, none over middle age, but they were keen, wide-awake, active men—sober and unusually silent, no swearing or braggadocio—men who seemed to think action better than words.

Mr. Conrad said nothing to Dick about his discovery that morning, for he had not hitherto made a confidant of him, as he had done with Mr. Hines and the town marshal.

After two hours of rest and refreshment they pulled out again, the ambulance now in advance of the two train wagons and Tombstone Dick a hundred yards in advance of that. Two mounted men acted as advance plankers to the right and left of him—two movers flanked the rear-most wagon, the rest remained with the train.

The traveling orders were in case of alarm—to halt, park the wagons, teams inside, and to rally to the center ready for action.

Nothing occurred to check the steady movement forward until they were in sight of their first intended camping place, by a small stream with plenty of wood and grass on its banks.

Suddenly a cloud of dust was seen ahead. As it was on the regular trail, the guide merely rode ahead rapidly to see what was coming without ordering any halt.

He met the small posse—only three men besides Boyd who had gone out to see if the story of Parkerton was true. They had been beyond White Springs without finding a trace of any man or party out of Tombstone.

Boyd was mad enough to shoot his deceiver on sight. Two days had been thrown away in a hard and profitless ride.

But Mr. Conrad was glad to see the marshal. He called a halt and begged him to camp with him that night, to rest and refresh his men.

But when he told of the discovery his daughter and himself had made that morning, and the note he had left for Mr. Boyd, the latter could not be induced to halt for even five minutes.

"The villain will not stay till I get there I fear and once out of town, it will not be easy to find him!" said the marshal. "My horses are native bronchos and will stand a push. I will get in town by midnight or soon after and if he's there, he is my captive, and I'll send a special messenger to let you know he is caged. That is, without you will go back to aid me and to prosecute!"

"I shall not turn back," said Mr. Conrad, decidedly. "I have started for the mines, and thither I go!"

"I hope you will go through safe and sound. A better party never went out of Tombstone, considering its size!"

After a brief delay, and from the lips of Magdalena a renewed description of the man she had seen at the window, Boyd and his men dashed homeward on a swift lope, a pace those wiry bronchos can keep up for twenty hours on a

stretch, if they can get a sip of water once in a while.

A half-hour later Mr. Conrad and his party made their first camp.

It was on a small, sluggish creek, in a narrow strip of timber, with good grass for the animals.

As soon as harness and saddles could be taken off, every animal was driven to the best grass under guard. The cook started his fires and some of the men took the seats from the ambulance so that the beds could be placed in order for Mr. Conrad and the ladies before darkness came on.

Tombstone Dick posted two sentinels well out on the approaches rear and front, and with an experienced eye looked to everything that was needed.

Soon all but the guards were at supper, enjoying hot tea and coffee, fresh steak and vegetables and good fresh bread, for in travel this is always the hearty meal of the day and taken most at leisure. The guards and horse-watch were relieved and came in to supper and then, just at dark every mule and horse was brought in and picketed short in camp.

In the morning, while coffee was making, they would be fed again and then as soon as a hasty meal was taken by the party the start would be made when it was light enough to see the trail, so as to take advantage of the cool morning air.

"How do you like this life, lady?" asked Dick, as his mother and Miss Conrad stood near their ambulance before retiring.

"Oh, *very* much!" said Magdalena enthusiastically. "The ripple of water, the rustling of leaves overhead, even the tramp of the animals is music to me. The blaze of the camp-fire, the sparks vanishing away in the gloom—all is new to me, but in no way disagreeable. And here in the ambulance your mother and myself have a neatly curtained chamber, and my dear father has a couch on which he can rest peacefully. But I feel sorry for the men who make their beds on the cold ground!"

"They are used to it, lady, and rest better there than they would in a luxurious bed. But I will not detain you by my idle talk. You need rest. You will be awakened for coffee and a light meal an hour before dawn, for in the cool mornings we make most headway."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE BIRD FLOWN.

It was after midnight when Marshal Boyd halted with tired horse in front of his office. Entering and sending his animals to be fed, he found a couple of his deputies fiery mad. They had been off like himself on a false scent.

A cowboy apparently scared half to death had dashed into town and said he had ridden into an ambush of road-agents down the stage-line and barely got away with his life. He exhibited two bullet-holes in his hat as proof and as the stage would soon be along that line, the deputies got a dozen men together and started for the place where the man reported the robbers to be lurking.

On arriving, nearly ten miles from town they found they had been hoaxed—not a sign that any one had ever been in the bush described. When they got back and tried to find the cowboy who had led them astray he too was missing.

"No matter—I am glad you are all here!" said Boyd. "I've a surround to make and may need every man, for I've a hard rascal to capture!"

Then, without losing any time, he went to the saloon of Calamity Jane and having posted men all around it, he went inside and asked her to put another dealer over her game. He had some questions to ask her.

She did so calmly and with not a sign of alarm or excitement, she asked him what special business he had with her.

"You have a lodger overhead. A tall man, middle-aged, well dressed, wearing no beard, whose name is Lew Mortimer!"

"You are mistaken, Mr. Boyd!" she said with a smile.

"Not at all, madam—he was seen there early this morning by those who know him only too well! I wish you would call him down—it is my duty to arrest him. I do not wish to make a fuss and injure your place, for I give you the credit of keeping the best order of any place in town!"

"You are *very* kind. But I have no lodgers. The last one left early to-day, a Mr. Raymond—not Mortimer. He went on a mining trip to Mexico, with Pete Parkerton and others, that I was only too glad to know had left the town, for they were no good to me or any one else in business!"

"I dislike to doubt you—I wish to be your friend and know you would not harbor a person you knew to be a criminal."

"Again I must thank you for your excessive kindness."

This in a very sarcastic tone. Then she added:

"What has the man done you are in search of? Shot anybody in a square fight or run away with another man's wife?"

"It is not our custom to say what we arrest a

man for, until we have our hands on him. Will you permit me to go and look through your rooms up-stairs without objection?"

"Certainly, sir. There are four rooms. Here are the keys to all of them!"

The marshal bowed and took the keys. She returned to her game. He was gone eighteen or twenty minutes, then came back and as she joined him handed her back the keys.

"Well, sir—you found the rooms empty?"

"Yes, madame. Number Two, however, had been recently occupied! The bed slept in last night evidently has not been made up!"

"I know it. I told you the occupant of that room left this morning!"

"Yes, and he left evidence that satisfied me he is the man I wanted!"

"Ah?"

Her face flushed and her looks for the first time betrayed uneasiness.

"Here is the envelope to a letter which he probably read and destroyed—dropping the envelope under his table. The envelope is addressed to my name and marked 'special.' It was to have been left at my office this morning, but it was *not* left."

"Mr. Raymond has been ill and until about ten this morning has not left his room for near ten days, the time he has been here. He could not have gone out to intercept a letter meant for you, without my hearing of it!"

"It may have been brought to him by a spy!"

"Possibly—one of your own men like as not. It is an old saying there's no honor among thieves!"

He flushed up and would have made an angry reply. The thought that she was a woman restrained him.

He turned away and left her place and called in his men.

"The bird has flown," he said to them. "We can do no more to-night. We are all tired. Turn in and get rest—in the morning if I can strike the trail of this man, I'll muster a good squad and go for him. Dead or alive, he shall be my meat. Bet your last dime on that!"

He went back to his bachelor lodgings—tired, moody and disappointed. His bedroom was over his office.

His mind was full of thought. Over a spirit lamp he brewed a cup of coffee.

"Ten days," he mused while the beverage was simmering, "that woman said the man she called Raymond had been here. It is just ten days since the stage was attacked and the driver and Express messenger mortally shot. Neither the girl or father got hit, though they were fully exposed and saw the outlaws almost within arm's length. To have fired on the old man would have endangered the girl. And she is wanted alive, not dead, by this would-be lover. I see it all. He instigated that attack, perhaps was in it. And he has had that English agent put out of the way to prevent his communicating some important matter to Mr. Conrad. I see through it all. And now—most likely, he has raised a party to intercept Conrad on his route and to capture his lovely daughter. If Bill Boyd *lives*, that game shall be blocked. She is the most lovely girl I ever saw and though nothing to me, except a pure and beautiful lady whom I can no more reach than I could a queen on her throne, she shall not fall a victim to such a villain!"

Boyd now drank a cup of coffee, ignited a cigar and resumed his musing.

Conrad said the man by theft and forgery had taken over one hundred thousand dollars. That he neither speculates nor gambles and is not intemperate though he uses wine in a genteel way! He may have a great part of that money with him. And, if so, the means to hire a large and desperate gang. I'll have to see Hines. I can't get volunteers to take a great risk without they see some chance of good pay. That is the worst of this country. In the East, men will hunt down criminals for the sake of having their hard career checked and their crimes punished. Here the first question if an officer wants help is—"How will it pay? Is there color in it?"

Boyd sighed, smoked his cigar out, looked at his watch, saw that he could sleep about three or four hours before Hines would be up and around, then set his alarm-clock to the hour of waking, unbelted his pistols, kicked off his heavy riding-boots and then without undressing threw himself down on his cot and drew a blanket over him.

The night air came in cool through the open window.

CHAPTER XXII.

MANOLO.

"MANOLO, when I close the game to-night, follow me over to my private parlor. I have a duty for you."

"Senora, I am your slave, body and soul. What you bid me do, Manolo will perform, or die in the attempt."

The first words were spoken by Calamity Jane after Boyd had turned away from her place, his vain search in her house concluded.

The answer came from one who at a glance

seemed to be a mere boy. He was a slender, beardless youth, not so dark as Mexicans usually are, but evidently, from his features, jet-black eyes, and accent, a Mexican with American blood in his veins. Really, he was over twenty years of age—he didn't know how old, himself.

His mother and he, while the latter was under ten years of age, had been captured by Cochise, an Apache chief. The mother and child, though captives and made to work for their captors, were not treated worse than the Indians used their ponies, which is saying a great deal for them—the Indians.

About two years previous to the present events, a body of cowboys, after stolen horses, had a sharp fight with the band of Apaches which held Manolo, and rescued him, after he had been shot through and through with an arrow to prevent his recapture.* They brought him in, and Calamity Jane in kind pity took him into her house, hired a surgeon to dress his wound, nursed him back to life, and from that time to now had clothed, lodged and fed him, giving him all the pocket-money he would accept at her hands, which was little indeed, for his gratitude made him her willing servant.

He watched near her table from the hour she stood behind it till she left, and woe to the man who even cast a dark look or spoke an ill word to affect his benefactress.

He supposed his mother was killed at the time he was rescued, for he had heard her cry out in agony before he fell, and he thought he had no one left but Calamity Jane to reverence and to work for.

He was, as we said, slender in build, but lithe and strong, a fine shot, and no one could ride a bucking broncho as well as he in all that town. Calamity Jane knew how true and honest he was, and kept him by her nights to watch the game, and when she closed to help her place her winnings in the great safe, of which she alone held the "combination."

No matter how high the play, or how much money was on her table, or in the hands of the players, Calamity Jane invariably closed her game at two o'clock in the morning. After depositing her winnings and capital, and closing the safe, she went over to her own apartments across the way, where a delicious supper awaited her, supped and retired. Unless it was otherwise ordered, Manolo slept with another armed and trusted servant in the room fronting the vault in which the great safe rested.

This night, when Calamity Jane left the saloon, he crossed the street to her parlor.

After she entered and wearily took her seat, she turned to Manolo, who stood hat in hand, waiting for her to speak.

"Manolo, can you follow a trail a day or two old, rapidly and surely?" she asked.

"Yes, senora—were it a week old, if no rains had come to wash it out."

"A party left here at an early hour yesterday, to go south prospecting. Pete Parkerton was the guide!"

"Yes, senora. I heard the men tell of it."

"You knew I had a lodger in Number Two, over the saloon?"

"Yes, senora, you sent me up to his room with a basket of fruit and some flowers, once. He was asleep, though, and did not see me."

"Ah! I had forgotten that. Then you would know him if you saw him again?"

"Yes, senora—Manolo never forgets a face!"

"Well, Manolo, that man is my friend. He has trusted me and I wish to shield him from harm. I want him warned that enemies intend hunting him down. You know the city marshal?"

"Yes, senora—I saw him to-night in the saloon."

"He must be watched in the morning. If you find he is in town raising a party of men to go away on a trip, you must take two of the best horses money can buy, so as to change when one is tired to the fresher one, and take the trail ahead of him and reach Mr. Raymond and tell him what I say."

"Yes, senora. It shall be done."

"And no one must know your errand but him I send you to."

"I understand."

"Nor, except to him alone, by whom you are sent."

"I will speak to no one else, senora."

"You will need money. I knitted this silken purse. It is yours, forever. In it there is in gold about five hundred dollars. Use it on your errand or in preparing for it. Come back to me and report after you have seen him."

"Yes, senora. If I live I will not fail."

"All right. Will you eat supper with me?"

"Pardon, senora—I need sleep to be strong for my work. Let me go at once to rest."

"Right! Go, and success be with you, my brave boy."

Manolo bowed low and vanished. Calamity Jane gave a sigh of relief.

"Forewarned, he will not be taken at a disadvantage," she said. "I hardly know why, but I feel a strange interest in that man."

* Almost all Indians at war will slay a captive rather than allow his escape or rescue.

CHAPTER XXIII.
THE COURIER'S RIDE.

EARLY next day, or I should say early that day, for it was morning when Boyd lay down to rest, he rose refreshed even by a short repose. A quiet, dreamless sleep of three hours is worth more than an entire night of restless tossing to and fro over a dream-disturbed bed.

Dressing, he went to the nearest restaurant and took breakfast. Then he went to see Mr. Hines and advise with him on the situation.

As soon as he rose, by the way, he had sent out one of his men to learn all he could about Parkerton's departure and the course he took. He knew these men had not directly followed the trail of Conrad's party, or he would have met them while returning to the town.

Hines was surprised and greatly annoyed when he learned that the man who had ruined his old friend, and even now threatened his peace and happiness, if not his life, had been living in the town and almost within pistol-shot of his house for ten days back.

He agreed with Boyd that the man meant evil to Conrad, yet, and had gone out without doubt, to intercept him somewhere on his way to the mines, when his small party would be far from help.

"I've made up my mind," said Boyd, "to leave my duties in town to deputies and to take the other matter in hand myself. But I am in a quandary as to which of two courses to take.

"The first idea is to follow Mr. Conrad up with a party as fast as I can and joining him, so strengthen his force as to be able to defy any attack and thus see him safe to his destination.

"Once there, with plenty of armed men, in well-placed position for defense, he can take care of himself.

"The other plan is to take a strong and select posse, follow Parkerton and Raymond upon their direct trail and to arrest both men before they reach the point where they mean to lay for Conrad.

"Now, which plan do you think is best?"

"The last!" said Mr. Hines, without hesitation. "It will kill the whole thing on the start, be the work of only two or three or four days at the most, for going light, with good men and animals, you can soon overtake him, even with a start of a day or a little more. If you take my advice—hurry up and you can be on the trail by noon. I can send an old hunter and trapper with you who knows every spring, stream and water-hole in the country. He has trailed for Crook, Miles, Sumner and others in the army, and will guide you as probably no other man in this place can. He is down in my mine now. I will send him to you—when he reports, his name is Mart Wilder!"

"All right—but I need funds for arms, to buy or hire horses, get men, provisions and all that."

"Get what you want and give a sight order on me. I will pay as fast as each order comes to me."

"That relieves my mind of all trouble, Mr. Hines. I will be in the saddle with not less than fifteen good men, more if I can get them, in two hours!"

"Good—I will go out with you and help you in your arrangements!"

The honest mine-owner at once left his cosy home to aid the marshal.

"Are you sure you can make all preparations in two hours?" he asked of Boyd, as they reached the street.

"Yes, before noon, to call it the latest, I will be on the rascal's trail. I have a man out now to find it, who will report at my office by the time I get there, I think!"

Neither the marshal nor his friend noticed the slender form which sauntered with apparent carelessness along by them when those words were spoken. Yet, had they seen the dark eyes of the young Mexican, Manolo, flash when he heard those words, they would not have felt so easy.

Ten minutes later he reported to Calamity Jane, and then hurrying off to a stable near by, where two fleet horses stood saddled and bridled ready for use, he leaped on one and led the other out of town at a sweeping gallop.

He was a handsome rider, and with a light rifle slung at his back, a knife and revolvers in the red sash about his waist, looked as if able to take care of himself almost anywhere.

When he passed the office of the marshal, the latter saw him, and an instinctive suspicion of his errand flew into the officer's mind.

"That is the young chap that hangs around Calamity Jane," he said to one of his best men who stood by his horse in front of the office. "He is sent to warn the party I am after. I fear. After him at full speed, and arrest him. You have a good horse, the best besides my own in town; do not fail. If he gets away, he may spoil my whole game."

In a second, the officer was in the saddle, and the reins loose on the neck of his willing horse.

Away he sped like a bird on the wing, but the young Mexican, now on the outskirts of the town, was going like the wind. He had seen the uneasy glance of Boyd, and feared he would be pursued.

All too soon, he found this was the case, and his spurs came into play. Out over the sandy plain as steady as an arrow in its course he held his way. For a time, lighter in weight than his pursuer, he held his distance. Miles had been passed, then the thoroughbred on which the officer rode showed the value of its race. It had the wind and bottom as well as the speed, and distance lessened between the two in spite of Manolo changing to his led horse.

When about five miles out, the officer was so near the Mexican, that he sent a ball very close to him with one of his army Remington revolvers. Manolo knew if once in range, it would be a battle to the death with the officer, and for the sake of his mistress he did not want to hurt him. It might bring down the vengeance of the law on her.

"A man's life is something, that of a horse, nothing!" he muttered, as he unslung his rifle.

The next second, turning in his saddle, without checking his speed, he fired.

The horse rode by the officer staggered, then trembling, fell to the earth, shot fairly in the breast.

A wild shout of triumph broke from the Mexican's lips as he dashed on, free from his persistent and almost successful pursuer.

Baffled, the officer made the air "blue" with cuss-words. They didn't do him any good. I don't believe they ever helped anybody without he was stuck in the mud with an army mule team. I have heard a pious chaplain justify them on such an occasion.

He stood for five minutes watching the receding form of the triumphant rider, then took the saddle and bridle from his dead horse, and slowly, wearily, over the hot sand under a burning sun, plodded his way back with his equipments on his shoulder.

He met Boyd and his party just riding out of town, and told of his mishap, when he almost had the Mexican under fire.

"Go to Calamity Jane and tell her to give you as good a horse as you have lost, or I will make it hot for her when I get back."

He little thought, in his brave manhood, that he might never get back.

Getting directions from the dismounted officer to the points to strike the trail, the marshal, who had thirteen good men with him, well mounted and armed, rode on.

The dismounted man on reaching town at once called on Calamity Jane, and made the demand his chief had ordered.

To his surprise she coolly answered: "Buy the best animal you can find, and send the bill to me. It will be paid."

Then she asked the particulars of his chase, and what he followed the boy for.

He simply replied that his chief wanted the boy, the reasons he knew nothing of.

Calamity Jane smiled. She knew the reason well enough, but she was satisfied Manolo had sufficient start to achieve success, and that Mr. Boyd would have a long and weary ride for nothing.

It was her wish to keep on the best side of the officers as far as she could, so she called for a bottle of wine and the best dinner in the restaurant for the dismounted man, and made him a present of a double-eagle besides.

Such kindness paid. When he bought a horse he beat down to the lowest price, and then sent in an honest bill, instead of adding a fifty-spot, as he might have done.

And now we will return to Manolo.

Laughing, as he saw the officer rave and stamp by the side of his dead horse, he rode on, now taking care to let his own animals get their wind, not doubting other parties would be sent after him.

Following the trail, which was plain to be seen, he kept up as fast a gait as he dared, changing horses frequently, for he knew when the darkness of night came on he must stop—he could not then distinguish and keep the trail over the sandy desert, here and there only spotted with sage-brush and wild willow wherever water was to be had.

Rising on a sandy ridge, where he halted to let his horses get the benefit of a little breeze, he saw far away in his rear some dark speck in a compact body, and he knew that it was a party of men on his trail. He had little fear of their overtaking him, his horses were still fresh, and had got their "second wind," or their reserve force in play.

So he sped merrily on, taking no pains to conceal his route, not deviating a yard from the course of those he followed. About four in the afternoon he came to a creek where the first camp of Raymond and his men had been made. He halted here just long enough to water his horses and notice that, on rather a blind trail to the west of the camp, some more men had come in and joined the party.

The camp-fire used by the preceding party had brands yet alight and smoldering, and while his horses watered and nipped a little grass, Manolo, with a tin-cup he carried, made a little coffee and drank it for refreshment.

Then mounting, he dashed on at renewed speed. An hour of rest and water and grass put's miles of good running in a prairie horse.

He did not pause again until it was too dark

to see the trail. Then he halted in a small plain of bunch grass, and picketing his horses to short-range, laid down by the picket-pins, without shelter, to sleep till he could move on again.

His horses were not unsaddled; he merely took the bits from their mouths to let them feed better and was ready to mount at the least alarm.

He calculated and rightly, that his pursuers would not more than reach the camping-ground behind him by dark and he was from ten to fifteen miles ahead of them.

He slept soundly until he heard the southern nightingale or red-bird sound its matinal note as the Eastern star came up to announce the approach of day.

From a wallet that hung over his shoulder he drew some dried meat, a piece of bread and a flask of red wine, breakfasting while his horses fed at lengthened picket-ropes.

Thus, when he could again see the trail, he was ready for a start.

On, swiftly, watering whenever he came to a spring hole or stream, though they were few and far between, he made his way, the trail freshening as he went.

Those in advance did not seem by the tracks to be pushing their horses hard. Perhaps confident now in numbers, they were fearless, or careless whether followed or not.

This encouraged Manolo with the hope of overtaking them by night or before. So he urged on his horses, now pretty well tired, to their utmost speed. Only once in all the forenoon did he halt and then the sun was nearly at its meridian.

He stopped on rising a high, rocky ridge, because from that point he could look back many miles over the route by which he came. He could not see his pursuers. He therefore knew he had kept his advantage and was full three hours ahead. And in a chase that is a long, long way.

An hour before dark he saw a tree line in front which denoted water. His horses saw it too and bounded forward with fresh spirit.

Just as twilight deepened he was near the trees and saw a group of ten or twelve armed men come out from their shadow and, guns in hand, await his approach.

Drawing a white handkerchief he waved it to denote his friendly mission, and galloped on.

A minute later he halted in the middle of the group and sprang from his horse.

As he did so, a tall man in the center of the group gave one startled glance at his face, and turning pale seemed about to faint.

"What is the matter, Mr. Raymond?" cried Pete Parkerton in alarm.

"Ignacia—it is Ignacia herself!" he moaned and fell.

"My mother's name!" gasped Manolo.

CHAPTER XXIV.

WARNED.

"WHAT does it mean? I've never seen the boss taken this way—help me take him back to camp!" cried Parkerton.

"I'm better—I had a vertigo—where is she?" asked Raymond, rising and drinking a little liquor from a flask extended by Pete.

"There is no she here. Only a Mexican boy sent by Calamity Jane and he has news, you bet, or he wouldn't be on our trail!"

"Yes—I am sent to tell you Bill Boyd, the town marshal, is hot on your tracks. He is bound to arrest a Mr. Raymond and you too, Pete Parkerton. I heard him swear he'd do it."

"How large a party has he with him?" asked Pete.

"Between fifteen and twenty I think, I do not know exactly. You all will know soon. He is not over three or four hours behind me!"

"Fifteen or twenty and we number over thirty now that Jones is with us! And now we know he is coming we can lay for him and wipe him out without losing a man."

Raymond went back with the rest to the camp-fires inside the thicket. He kept his eyes fixed on the young Mexican with a strange expression in them.

"Those men who are after us will not reach here to-night will they?" he asked of him.

"No, sir—they cannot follow the trail after dark. I had to halt at dark last night and lay by till I could see, this morning!"

"Do they know you are ahead of them?"

"I think so, sir—for I was followed by an officer out of town. He was on a very fast horse and nearly got in pistol range of me. I shot his horse with my rifle and so got away!"

"Why didn't you shoot him?" asked Pete savagely.

"Because I have no wish to stretch a rope in Tombstone, when I go back!"

"You'll not go back in a hurry. You're with us now and you'll stay!" said Parkerton.

"I will not!" said Manolo, firmly. "I am in the service of the lady who sent me here and shall go back to her!"

"We'll see to that," said Pete. "You're not going back to tell where you left us and who you've seen here!"

"I go back as silent as I came. No one but my lady knows why I came or ever will know!"

"The boy is right. He will go back, undisturbed and unmolested by any one here!"

It was Raymond, and he spoke with a stern determination that overawed Pete into silence.

"Did your lady send a special message to me?"

This question was addressed by Raymond to the Mexican boy.

"She did, señor!"

"Then come with me to my camp-fire. There while you eat your supper you shall tell me what she said!"

The boy obeyed in silence.

"Your name?" asked Raymond, as he stood by his own fire and pointed to food and coffee near it.

"Manolo!"

"A Mexican by birth?"

"No, señor—I was born in Santa Fe. My mother was born in Puebla, old Mexico, I have heard her say."

"Ha! Her name?"

"Ignacia De Salvo!"

"Is she living?"

"I fear not, señor. Ten years ago she and I were made captives to Cochise the great Apache. When I was rescued I was shot through with an arrow—I heard her scream and fall and have never seen her since!"

While asking these questions, Raymond could not conceal his agitation. Some strange emotion seemed to strain every nerve to its utmost tension.

He waited until the boy had finished his supper, before he spoke again. The lad was hungry, as well as thirsty. He had eaten but little since he started.

When he put down his tin cup empty and turned from the food which lay yet in abundance before him, Raymond asked in a gentle tone:

"What message did Calamity Jane send me?"

"She bade me ride till I found you and to tell you that enemies were on your track who would hunt you down. She had sharp words with Marshal Boyd about you. He searched the house and was angry because he could not find you!"

"You will go back early in the morning, taking a route to avoid those who are following me and thank her for her kindness to me. I will write her a note which you must be sure to deliver!"

"If I live to reach her, señor, she shall have it from my hand!"

"And for yourself, wear this watch and chain as a remembrance of what you have done for me!"

"Señor—I can take no reward!"

"Silence! It is my wish. I do not want to wear this open temptation among such men as are around me. I have other reasons. Now lay down on my blankets here and sleep. I will see that your horses are fed grain to make them strong for to-morrow. And you shall go at dawn in safety from among these lawless men!"

"I thank you, señor. There is but one other who is kind to me and she sent me to you. I will sleep for I am tired!"

And the boy threw himself down on a blanket and was asleep almost as soon as he was down.

Raymond now went to the main camp-fire and ordered a man to care for the horses of the Mexican and to feed them well.

The man sullenly obeyed. There was a discontented look on almost every face. Raymond saw it and he knew he must be master now or never.

"Men!" said he. "You are in my pay, are you not? All of you except Captain Jones and his party have already had large advances. Speak—I want and will have an answer. I'm no tenderfoot and you'll soon find it out, if you arouse the fiend that is in me!"

"Boss—we're in your pay!" said Pete. "And we want to act square. But here comes a young chap, with splendid arms that he knows how to use, two good horses besides, and he'd be good help in a muss!"

"We have no need of him. He has brought me a message and must carry one back. I'll vouch for his silence and fidelity to us, with my own life. I know him and his stock, though he does not know me. He will start back at daylight by a route far outside of our trail, so he will not meet our pursuers. Those we will wait for and destroy. You hear me, I do not mean one man of them shall ever return to Tombstone again. If any of you are cravens, I am not!"

His stern, almost savage manner, his fiery words, coming from one who had hitherto been so calm, fairly dazed the rough element around him.

"You need not stare at me!" he said. "I have been West and South before. Ay—cre some of you were born when it was almost certain death to cross the plains. I'm no chicken, and you'll soon find it out!"

He was conqueror. He saw it, and ordering sentinels put out and all fires extinguished, he returned to the place where Manolo lay sleeping. For a moment he gazed with a sad, longing look in the boy's handsome face, then he extinguished the fire and sat down on the blanket close by his side.

Whether he slept or not, no one knew; but be-

fore the morning star was up, his voice was heard.

"Build no fires," he sternly said. "Feed your horses grain, they will not be turned out to grass this morning. We have work ahead of us."

Waking Manolo, he gave him cooked food, a bottle of red wine and some cold coffee for breakfast. Then he filled his wallet for his return trip.

Just at the first sign of day, he saw the young man mounted, his led horse in hand.

"Strike off south full ten miles at a gallop, and then turn head for Tombstone in a line parallel with the trail you came in on. You have my orders and my blessing. Go!"

The young Mexican bowed his head, rode away, and was lost to sight in a few minutes. Not a murmur was heard among the men. Hitherto, Pete Parkerton had acted as leader; now he had sunk to his old level. He had learned, and that suddenly, how much superior mind was to matter; for it was moral courage which had reduced these almost mutinous men at once to submission.

"Take a cold bite and eat hearty, men," said Raymond. "Call all the sentinels in—I will watch the points of danger."

The men obeyed, and when they were through, his next command was heard:

"Saddle up! A detail of four men will move the horses on about a mile and there wait for us. The rest of us will form an ambuscade in advance of this camp a half-mile, so that our pursuers, thinking we left early, will dash forward and find us, when they are under our fire at short pistol-shot. Then, firing as they are aligned, from our right to their left, each man's shot must tell. If a single man of them escapes, it may spoil our whole trip, for he will return to arouse an exterminating army of our enemies."

Each order was obeyed in silence. The men saw that their employer and leader meant business.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE AMBUSH.

BILL BOYD, as all the people in Tombstone knew, was a "rustler" when once he got started. The lawless element in the place feared him more than any of his predecessors. He had lived longer after taking office than any previous town marshal. He had killed more men; two to one. No man ever got the drop on him.

On this trip, he had rushed men and horses as fast as he dared without rendering them unfit for service. He had fifteen men with him, including Mart Wilder, whom Mr. Hines had furnished as a guide and hunter for his party; for going light, with scarcely any provision, they must often go hungry, or secure game, all too scarce in the arid section through which the route lay.

On the morning of his second day out, they started hungry. They had only a cup of coffee and a cracker each to pull out on.

"Mr. Wilder, don't you think you could pick up an antelope or a haunch of venison for us on the route?" asked Boyd, after he had ridden on for an hour or more, and when they were in sight of some timber ahead, two or three miles distant.

"Yes, sir; by scootin' off from the trail a bit, where there has been no chance to scare 'em. Ride on to yon bit o' timber and halt to water and feed and I'll bring you in some breakfast within an hour, I reckon! I could eat a hind-quarter of antelope alone, I believe!"

"Go ahead; we'll wait for you in the timber!" said Boyd.

And the old hunter wheeled out of line and rode over a low sand ridge toward a valley where he thought he would find game lurking.

Meantime, Marshal Boyd, thinking that he was at least half a day behind the party he was after, rode along at a fair pace and entered the wood where, as we know, Raymond had just left camp.

The fires, extinguished the night before, had not even a hot ember left.

"They got the alarm last night and have pushed on!" said Boyd, examining the camp closely.

His men coincided with him.

"We may as well unsaddle and let the horses feed till Wilder comes up with the game!" said the marshal. "Then, when we do go on, we can make time. Hungry men and horses aren't good for much!"

Little did the brave man think that a dismounted spy from Raymond's band was watching every motion. Ten minutes later Raymond knew the number and position of his pursuers.

At once he decided on his course of action. Calling his men together, he told them where their enemies were and his plans. In a body they were to creep down to close quarters under cover of the trees and bushes, and when he gave the word to fire, to shoot low and careful, sparing not a man.

The horses and arms would be a prize to those who got them.

"Build a fire, make coffee and take it easy,

boys, till we get meat!" said Boyd, sitting down on the trunk of a fallen tree, to rest.

One man started a fire, others put down coffee to boil, and then all took seats to wait for the coffee.

Suddenly—sharp and shrill as the yell of an Indian warrior, came the one word:

"FIRE!"

Following it, in a breath, came a volley so close, it seemed like one loud booming report, and without a moan, poor Boyd toppled over backward, pierced by two or three balls, and every man was down except one who was bending over the fire, and he ran toward the horses, which were plunging off in terror.

A half-dozen scattering shots followed him and he fell dead before he had run ten rods.

"Finish the work!" cried Raymond, as he strode forward, seeing several men writhing on the ground in dying agony.

It was done. And his pursuers, as he supposed, were "wiped out" to a man.

But he was mistaken. Wilder, not half a mile away, coming in with a dead antelope over his horse in front of his saddle, heard the terrible volley, then the few scattering shots and afterward three ringing cheers—the shouts of victory.

He saw some frightened horses flying over the plain without riders and he recognized them as having belonged to his own party.

"Boyd has ridden right into an ambush!" he muttered. "And I've been warning him about it all the time! I'm afraid every man has been wiped out!"

Seeing men shortly after, out pursuing the scattered horses, the old hunter concealed himself and horse in a dense willow thicket which sprung up in a swampy spot and waited.

He stayed there for over two hours, then leaving his horse securely fastened, he crept cautiously to the woods in the direction where he had heard firing.

Listening at every step, keeping under cover of every knoll and bush, he at last reached the woods.

There he skirted, keeping from tree to tree, covered, as he advanced, he at last reached the trail where it entered the woods. He heard no sound of man or beast. Trembling in every limb, brave old frontiersman though he was, he crept on.

Soon by the yet smoking fire, he saw what he had dreaded yet expected to see.

Boyd and every man of his party, with bullet-holes and stabs in their bodies ruthlessly inflicted after death, lay before him.

"The wretches!" he groaned. "If there's manhood in all Arizona, the murderers will roast at the stake for this cruel butchery. If I hadn't left the party they never would have gone blindly into this trap of death!"

Looking over the bodies, he saw that arms and every valuable had been taken from them. He had no means to bury them. All he could do, after going on and finding the murderers had resumed their journey, was to cover the bodies with brush to keep the ravens off until men could come out to bury them.

Then hastening to his horse, he merely cut enough meat from the antelope for one or two meals, then mounting turned and galloped back over the trail he had come. He was wild with grief and anger and rode as fast as he dared to push his horse till long after noon, before he stopped to rest and feed his animal and cook a bite for himself.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE TOWN ABLAZE.

"Is he dead? Oh, merciful Heaven! is he dead?"

This was the cry of Calamity Jane, when Manolo returned to report to her the result of his mission.

She stood in her private parlor, her face pale as snow, as if every vein was chilled.

"No, senora, no—I left him well and brave-hearted!"

"Then why are you wearing that? The watch and chain were his—worn by him when here!"

She pointed with trembling hand to the large chain of gold which encircled the neck of Manolo and to the watch attached which rested in his scarf.

"That strange man gave it to me, forced it on me against my wish, as he said, to make me remember the kindness I had done him. He did not expect pursuit and might have been surprised in camp but for the warning. Read the letter he sent to you by my hand."

The woman tore open the envelope with a hurried hand. As she did so a thousand-dollar United States bond fluttered to the floor.

She read the note aloud, then wondering, picked up the bond. These were the words she read:

"KINDEST OF WOMEN:—Your warning by the hand of brave young Manolo reached me in time to save me most likely from surprise, perhaps from death. I have given him my watch and chain, and send this bond for you to use for his benefit. I hope to see you both ere many weeks roll by. Again I thank you from the bottom of my heart. When we meet I hope to express my gratitude in a more substantial form. Have no fears for—Yours ever."

"RAYMOND."

"He has taken a great fancy to you, poor boy—but I forget you are ready to drop with fatigue. Rest there; I will get wine and after you drink that, will order food!"

Manolo could hardly stand. The excitement over, exhausted nature gave way and he would have fallen but for the sustaining hand of Calamity Jane as she led him to a sofa and placed a glass of wine to his lips.

No wonder. From the camp where he had left Raymond he had ridden almost steadily, changing from one horse to the other, all the way. His horses were nearly used up and so was he.

By morning he was rested and all right again. He resumed his old place quietly, saying not a word about his absence or its cause.

There was only one man in town then that could have revealed it. That was the deputy whose horse he had killed. And the tact and kindness of Calamity Jane had sealed his mouth.

But that afternoon, late, a man covered with dust, sick at heart, worn down with fatigue, rode into town on a horse that was just able to keep up under its tired rider.

The man was Mart Wilder and the tale he told fairly set the town ablaze with fury—that is, the better part of it.

The town marshal and thirteen men butchered, shot down from ambush without a chance for defense. Never before was such excitement known. Even the saloons were deserted and men were seen in groups on the street counseling plans of vengeance and urging instant and active pursuit of the murderers by a force large enough to overwhelm them or chase them out of the territory.

Active in this counsel, willing to go himself and to provide arms, horses, provisions, all that was needed, was Mr. Hines. The best men in the place were willing to leave business, all their interests to go and bury the dead and punish the assassins.

A subscription was got up for the widows and orphans of those who had left them, for several of Boyd's men had families. Calamity Jane paid as she put her name down for one thousand dollars. Charity covers many sins, is an old adage. Perhaps she sought to still her conscience for her share in the tragedy.

Whether he knew it or not, Mart Wilder did not speak of Manolo or any one being sent from Tombstone to put Raymond on his guard. The old man seemed almost dazed with horror when he spoke of his dead comrades all shot down by a single volley and he only saved by the accident of going on a hunt for food for his party.

He seemed hardly to realize how he had escaped and got back. When asked for particulars, he had none to give.

So they fed him and sent him to bed to rest, that he might be able to guide the new party that was making up.

They gave him only a night to rest, for at dawn the next morning fifty good and true men, the solid men of the place, headed by Lem Hines in person, were off on the old trail, with Mart Wilder as guide.

Calamity Jane sent no warning now. She knew Raymond would expect pursuit, and keep out of danger. If not, he must pay the penalty of his folly.

That he would be overtaken, with so great an advantage in distance, she did not deem probable, and she had seen too many outbursts of public indignation die away, and the cause sink to forgetfulness, to think this would last long. Every time a marshal had been shot or stabbed, there had been a fuss made over it, but it died away about as soon as the people elected another.

Boyd had been very unpopular with the rough and lawless part of the people, so there were many to rejoice over his "removal"—quoting Guiteau—while others regretted it as a public loss and calamity. So the world goes. Both the good and bad have friends.

CHAPTER XXVII. NIGHT AND MORNING.

FOUR days out. The party of Mr. Conrad, under the able management and guidance of Tombstone Dick, had made good progress, and got fairly settled into the detail of journey and camp life. Every team, saddle-horse and man had learned it and his place—they halted together, camped in perfect order, and at command "pulled out" with precision.

Four days out. That night they made their camp early. During the day they had crossed a trail which gave Dick Hartman some anxiety. There were the foot-marks of a small party of horsemen, moving in close order. The horses had not been shod—a sure sign they were Indian property. Whether this was a small war-party, or a squad of hunters going to a point where game could be found, it was not easy to determine. That it was not a party traveling with families, was certain, for no traces of lodge-poles were seen on the trail.

Dick chose a good, defensible position in a little ravine where there was wood, water and grass, but he ordered only a small fire, just enough to make tea and coffee, and cook supper, made early.

It was to be totally extinguished before dark, and the animals all brought in and secured in the area made by the parked wagons.

In addition to the regular guard, he sent out an extra man, and did not propose to sleep himself.

Mr. Conrad insisted on doing guard duty. But Dick would not allow it.

"You have the care of the ambulance and your daughter—that is enough," said Dick.

That night, sitting apart from the rest and watching the sun go down in a bank of dark broken clouds, above which lay a flecked mass of gray, known to sailor-men as a mackerel sky, Magdalena talked earnestly with her father about the man whose face she had seen and recognized when they were leaving Tombstone.

"Do you not fear that with all the rough element we have left behind us, that villain may raise a party and try to do us continued injury out here on our route where we can get no help or reinforcement?" she asked.

"I hope not, child," said her father. "I can say no more. Mr. Boyd is a very active and fearless officer, and you heard him say he would have him under arrest before he slept. In that case we are safe from any plans of his."

"Once arrested, with three indictments awaiting him, he cannot escape a long term of imprisonment."

"But he is wary and cunning, my father, and taking alarm from the knowledge that we recognized him, he may get out of Boyd's way, and still plan to do you an injury. He has been West before—I have heard him tell you so when he was in your employment."

"Yes—he came from the West when he entered my service. He had quite an adventurous life in his youth, I think was once with the great Santa Fe traders, St. Vrain and Aubrey."

"Then he knows this country even better than we do. I shall not feel easy in my mind until we are safe in your block-houses at the mines."

"We must trust to Providence, child, and the good and true men with us. We are well armed and prepared for defense and could drive off a larger force than our own!"

"Unless surprised, papa."

"Which seems impossible with the vigilant care of Tombstone Dick," said the other.

Twilight was now on them, and as there would be no fires to sit up by, those who were not on guard duty were told to retire and get all the rest they could.

Dark clouds rising rapidly in the east looked as if they would have a rainfall before the midnight hour was on them.

"It will be only a little thunder-storm—nothing to last, and will lay the dust for to-morrow," said Dick, when Mr. Conrad asked with some anxiety.

"Only a little thunder-storm" in Arizona, and only "a gentle zephyr" in Kansas or Nebraska, would be taken as a terrible downpour and a juvenile cyclone in the East, where nature deals most gently with her "tenderfoot" children.

Before midnight the occupants of the ambulance were awakened by a report which fairly shook the ground as if some great piece of ordnance had been discharged close at hand. Then flash after flash of lightning, so vivid that even through the closed curtains of the carriage it made everything visible; peal on peal of deafening thunder rolled through the air, and soon the rain came down in a deluge.

Magdalena trembled with terror lest the ravine, or small valley in which they were encamped, should fill and they be washed away, but the cool, reassuring voice of Tombstone Dick was heard close at hand, saying it was already breaking away in the east and the storm would soon pass by.

While it lasted there was no sleep in that camp. Even the animals crouched and shivered in fear and made no attempt to break away.

Yet in an hour all was clear and bright overhead, the air cool and delightful and from thence until dawn, sleep was a luxury.

Early as ever the camp was astir, fires made with some difficulty from rain-soaked wood, coffee made and the usual breakfast cooked and eaten. The sun was just up when the train pulled out in its usual order—the guide a rifle-shot in advance, flankers out and every one on the alert.

Mr. Conrad seemed to brighten up every day on the route, his health improved and his spirits lightened as he neared what he hoped would long be his permanent and profitable home.

"How many days yet will we be on the road, dear papa?" his daughter asked on the fifth morning.

"If nothing occurs to check our progress, we will be there in seven days from to-day. So our guide and wagon-master, faithful Dick, told me last night. We are fast nearing the mountain ranges and there travel will be slow, but we will have better water, an abundance of fuel and fair grass for the teams. Game too will be abundant and we can change from bacon and dried meats to something more agreeable—venison steaks and grouse!"

"Where game is plenty, Indians may also be found," said Magdalena.

"True, my child—but they will steer clear of well-armed men who show courage and dis-

cipline in every movement. Indians never attack when they cannot surprise. War with them must be one-sided—the chances all for them, or they keep out of it."

"That is a comfortable thought!" said Magdalena, looking at her Winchester rifle with a glance of pride. "I wish I had brought a saddle-horse along. It would be so pleasant to dash along among the sweet-scented flowers and be free of this jolting vehicle. It is a tiresome way to journey!"

"Yet very comfortable in such a night as that just passed!" said her father with a smile.

"Close up, keep the teams as near each other as possible and be ready to park at any minute!" came in a stern, sharp voice the order from Tombstone Dick, who rode back at a gallop to give it.

"Any new danger? Speak—I am not easily frightened!" cried Magdalena.

"I am not certain. If there is, we must be ready to meet it, that is all!" said Hartman.

"I have seen a horseman at a distance, two or three times on ridges, who seems to act like a scout, observing our course. He may be a solitary hunter, or he may be a scout for some war-party. I have only had a glance of him now and then; he seems to avoid coming in plain sight and that is the most suspicious. Always on guard is the surest prevention to misfortune!"

He again rode forward to his post and the train moved on.

CHAPTER XXVIII. INDIANS.

AFTER that fearful massacre of their pursuers, which had been carried out under the entire management of Raymond, the band seemed to recognize in him a leader who was to be feared as well as obeyed. He had at first left all management to Pete Parkerton, and a very loose and careless management it was.

Pete had laid in all the stores, and whisky was the leading article on the list; and he kept pretty full all the time himself, and others were not backward in following his example.

Now, when Raymond took command, the liquor was served as a ration, and no man was allowed an extra drop. This was "awful hard" on some of them, as Pete expressed it, but it kept them fit for service.

On the day that the massacre occurred, Raymond detached three men under Captain Jones himself, the latter being one of the three, to strike across to the route taken by Tombstone Dick's train, and note their progress and condition, as well as their exact number.

A man was to be sent back after they were first sighted to report to him, and then another, he giving his route, so that his trail would not be crossed or lost.

The two routes were now converging, coming nearer and nearer to each, every mile of advance. Pete Parkerton and Jones had traversed the country time after time, and were fully familiar with every hill, grove, spring-hole and stream.

Thus—one of the scouts, careful as he was to hide his motions, had been discovered by Tombstone Dick.

On the day after this detail went out, one scout came back and reported to Raymond. The latter thus had the exact number in Conrad's party, the manner of the march, and a description of the careful guard kept by the watchful half-breed day and night.

"A surprise will be next to impossible," thought Raymond, "and in a fair, square fight, a good many men must go under."

Little he cared if he succeeded in getting possession of Magdalena Conrad and did not lose his own life. What were the lives of others to his selfish soul? All his life he had existed for himself—not a thought for others. His own ambition, his own evil passions, his own wild desires gratified, he looked for no other results.

On the next day, the second scout came in, and he brought startling news. Jones had sent him in all haste, for a new peril was afield.

Jones reported that a war-party of Apaches had struck the trail of the other train, and appeared to be hovering near waiting for some good point to make an attack. He had narrowly escaped their scouts, and would come in, but for the orders he had to wait till Raymond sent instructions.

This news worried Raymond woefully. Should the Apaches make an attack on that small train, it would be with a large force, and for the purpose of getting scalps and plunder. They would not leave a soul alive. All his ambitious plans would be wrecked, his heavy expenditure go for nothing.

He sent back a scout—one of Jones's best men—to tell the latter to keep trace of the Indian movements; he would close in with his party at once, and while the Indians had only eyes for the Conrad train, he would swoop down on them and try to get them out of the way in a clean sweep.

And at once he struck off at as good a gait as his party could take, traveling by night to avoid exposure, in order to carry out the plan made necessary by this new element of danger.

A little before dawn, halting in a wooded val-

ley not two hours' ride from the trail which Conrad would pass over that day, if not interrupted, he waited to hear from Jones, who he knew must be near at hand and looking for him, since he sent him word as near as he could where he would wait.

And a little after sunrise, when the band without fires were breakfasting on bread, cold meat, and a single ration of whisky, Jones came in with the other scout.

He reported the Indians in camp scarce two miles away, with their ponies ready for mounting, and scouts off watching the train of Tombstone Dick, which was not far distant.

"We must attack them in the rear, where they expect no danger!" said Raymond, in hearing of all the men.

"We didn't hire out as Indian-fighters!" growled Pete Parkerton.

"You were hired to obey orders! If these Indians are in our way, we never can reach the plunder of the other party!"

"That's solid truth, and no mistake!" said Jones. "The boss knows what he is about! We can creep in on them reds and give 'em glory hallelujah afore they dream of anything else but plunderin' the very crowd we're after. Once we scatter them, wipin' out all we can, we've got our game nigh at hand and easy to take!"

That settled it. When Jones went with the boss, Pete Parkerton had no more to say.

So, leaving barely men enough to guard the horses, Raymond ordered an immediate but stealthy advance on the Indians.

He formed his men in three columns, taking the center himself, putting Parkerton on his left and Jones on his right, with orders to close around the Apaches, when he opened fire from his column.

Creeping on in silence, they were soon within hearing of the unsuspecting red-men. They were eating, while their horses fed in a swale near by. They all stood or sat around three large fires, over which haunches of elk and deer meat roasted; and confident in the scouts between them and the little train they meant to capture, had no sentinels out.

Raymond and his men, well under cover, and with great care got almost within pistol-shot before they were seen. The instant discovery was certain, Raymond gave the order to fire, and while a deadly volley was poured in from the center, the other columns rushed on, and the Indians, who sought to fly, were so panic-stricken that resistance was not thought of, and were shot down from right and left.

In only a few seconds nearly two-thirds of a band of fifty were dead or dying, and the rest—some on foot, others reaching their horses—were in flight, believing a whole regiment of "long-knives" was after them.

The victory was complete, only two men slightly hurt, and they wounded by dying Apaches, who fired as the victors came rushing up to them.

"A boss job. It just takes us to paint things red!" cried Pete Parkerton, when it was all over.

Raymond said nothing until he had seen to the two wounded men and helped Jones to dress their wounds. Neither was badly hurt and a man was sent back to bring up their own horses.

A few good rifles, some ammunition and twenty serviceable ponies were captured here. The rest of the horses had run off, or been hurried off by the few surviving Indians.

Raymond allowed his men to feast heavily on the delicious meat left already cooked by the Indians and he enhanced his popularity by serving out an extra ration of whisky as soon as his horse came up with the pack-mules in company.

Then, cautioning silence and no straggling, he headed directly for a point where he could intercept the train in charge of our hero—Tombstone Dick.

To that train we must now turn our attention. Tombstone Dick did not, owing to distance and the brief glances he got, know that the first scout he discovered was a white man. But the next day he saw what he knew to be an Indian lookout, on a ridge where he had a clear view of him and his horse. After that, time and again he saw Indians and he was greatly worried. He knew the deadly cunning and the untiring patience of the Apache nation and that they would never let him reach his destination in peace when once they had him in view.

He fortified his camp at night now and did not pull out till he sent a scout well ahead to see there was no ambuscade in his way. He and his men were fast getting worn down watching by night and day, with scarce any rest and he began to regret having tried the trip with so small a force.

Shortly after he started out on the sixth morning, with Indian vedettes in sight, he was startled by the sound of heavy firing but a few miles away apparently on his right.

It came in heavy volleys like the firing of regular troops, lasting only a short time and then a few scattering shots and all seemed to be over.

The Indian scouts went out of sight at the sound of the first gun.

"What does it mean?" asked Mr. Conrad, for Dick had halted the train.

"It means a battle, but who is in it is what I would like to know!" said Dick. "I dare not leave this train myself, neither do I dare to weaken my party, by sending out scouts."

"How will we learn?" asked the merchant, seriously alarmed.

"Perhaps by the sight of some fugitive. The fight has been sharp and soon over," said Dick. "We may as well move on. We gain nothing by standing here and the sooner we are on better ground for defense, the better for us."

And the train was started on, with all the guards in advance or acting as flankers.

Suddenly some horses dashed over the trail. All but one was riderless. On that horse a wounded Indian clung with a death-grasp. He went by so close to Tombstone Dick that the latter recognized him as an Apache with war-paint on. The horses had Indian saddles and bridles on. They were out of sight in a few seconds evidently greatly terrified into a regular stampede.

"Apaches, and they have been whipped!" said Dick. "But by whom is the question. I know of no troops operating in this part of the territory. We are too far from any mining operations, for miners to be out in a body, without it is some new prospecting party. I'd give my pay for the trip to know who has fought and won that battle."

Coming to a narrow pass in his route where a few men could make a stand against many, if need be, he determined to halt and wait until he had learned something definite to allay his anxiety.

Consulting Mr. Conrad, he decided to leave the train, well-secured, with the teams unhitched and at feed, and go alone in search of some sign or information which could settle his mind as to what was before him.

His mother, more anxious for his life than her own, offered to go in his stead.

"I am used to riding, know the ways of the wilderness, can take my course by sun or stars, and know how to use my weapons of defense. Let me go and you remain to do your duty in guarding that which is intrusted to you!" she said to her son.

"No—dearest mother. Your place is by that young lady's side and nowhere else. I can allow no one to risk this scout but myself. I shall incur no needless peril—shall go and return quickly, and then we will know just what to do."

Touching the flank of his horse with his heel he dashed forward. In a minute he was out of sight. It was a handsome-looking place where he had halted them—but no enemy could come in upon them, except from direct front or rear, and then the road was narrow, the gorge on either side lined with overhanging cliffs so steep and high they were impassable to man or beast.

Dick had not been gone over fifteen or twenty minutes when he returned, his horse at full speed as he came on. His look told that his anxiety was increased, rather than lessened.

"We have enemies close at hand!" he said in a low tone. "If I can reach one point before they come down on us, we can fight them off. Forward, with the train—forward, fast as we can go!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

BETRAYED.

THE road was rough and rocky and the wheels of ambulance and wagons rattled noisily on, but with the guards all in front, their rifles at a present, Dick dashed on.

Suddenly, louder than the noise of wheels and creaking axles, louder than the clatter of hoofs came the dash of a waterfall. Nearer and nearer it seemed, until suddenly it was seen shooting down from the cliff on their left in a sheet white as snow, and apparently right in their onward course.

But as they came closer, it could be seen that the roadway went under it and that the torrent fell in a gorge that opened at a right angle with the one they were in and led off to the north-west.

Here, right under the waterfall, an immense, open excavation showed itself in the southern wall of the gorge.

Into this cave, as it might be termed, Dick caused the train to be headed. There was room for all the animals, and the wagons drawn across the entrance fenced them in.

"Where are we?" asked Magdalena of the half-breed, who had caused the ambulance to be drawn as far within the cavity as it could be got.

"In the first spur of the great San Rita Range," was his reply. "Remain back here with your father—I have to look out in front!"

He had to speak loudly to be heard amid the turmoil made by the water and the clatter of animals crowded in on the rocky floor. But she understood him.

The spot chosen for defense was admirable if it was to repel an immediate attack. The road turned just enough to lay open to an enfilading fire

any parties approaching from front or rear and it was so narrow that not more than a wagon or three horsemen abreast could approach. And from the barricade of the wagons which secured and covered the teams and saddle-horses, this concentrated fire could be opened either way.

But it was a poor place to be besieged in. There was no forage for their animals except the grain they had along. Though water was almost too plenty, there was no wood for fires. To cook, they must depend on an oil stove and two or three spirit lamps which had been included in stores picked out in Tombstone by the thoughtfulness of Mr. Hines.

Dick had stated that an enemy was close at hand. He had ridden almost upon an advance guard of Raymond's party under command of Jones, and had while wheeling his horse recognized some of the hardest villains that had infested Tombstone.

He too was recognized by them, called on with bitter oaths to surrender and fired on as he dashed back toward his train. Thus he knew the party was composed of enemies and must be large since it had engaged and beaten a war-party of Apaches, for he had no doubt these were the men who had fired the volleys he had heard early in the morning.

They did not follow him up at once. And this gave him time to reach the strong position which he had noted when he passed it.

Jones at once sent back to Raymond when Dick was discovered. The latter was furious because he had not been able to lay an ambush for Conrad's train before any of his men were seen.

But anger could not remedy the error. When his whole force was up, he wanted at once to advance, but now Jones, old in that kind of work, advised him first to learn by a careful scout how those on Conrad's train were prepared to receive him.

For it was certain they were not coming on to offer battle in an open valley such as Raymond was then in, for they were full a mile from the gorge we have described.

So Raymond, not wishing yet to be seen told Jones to take a couple of men and reconnoiter.

The outlaw chose Pete Parkerton for one and took another Tombstone rough for the next.

Dashing along on the trail of Tombstone Dick they were soon in sight of the waterfall and the narrow gorge in front and beyond it.

"I don't like goin' into yon dark hole!" said Pete. "Three men there, well armed, could hold off twenty!"

"It does look nasty, nevertheless it's orders to find out where that train is and here goes!" said Jones.

Slowly and cautiously he rode on until he was in short rifle range of the cascade. Pete was in the rear—the other rough alongside of him.

Suddenly there was a puff of smoke seen in by the dark rocks and a bullet went so near the head of Jones that feeling its wind, he thought he was hit.

"Reckon you know now where the train is!" cried Pete, wheeling his horse to run.

"Cuss 'em I can't see nobody!" growled Jones, holding his ground, at a dead halt.

"Can you feel 'em?" cried Pete as he struck spurrs to his horse, seeing Jones reel in his saddle as half a dozen shots were fired at once.

It was the last word Pete ever spoke. A bullet pierced his brain and clinging to his horse, but dead, he was carried back to where Raymond waited for a report.

He got it from Jones, who had another bullet in his lame shoulder and was only too glad to get off with his life, for his other companion was shot dead and his horse fell dead too from the same volley.

"So—they're well posted and mean fight. Two men gone and another hurt. A bad beginning makes a good ending, sometimes!"

This was all Raymond said and he spoke as coolly, as he might if going into an ordinary target match.

"We never can root 'em out of the position they're in!" said Jones, as Raymond paid attention to his wound.

"We can starve them out!" said Raymond coolly. "We are in a good grass and game country. According to your say they're in a close rocky gorge where there may be water, but no wood or grass. If they lose their animals they're at our mercy!"

"They may lack out of there!"

"Then we'll follow them up and as we are three or four to one of them, overwhelm them in the open country!"

"Well—it's your funeral, though it has come awful close to lein' mine! You are loss and can do your own undertakin'."

Raymond had a good field glass. Leaving the main party in position where they were, he went forward taking care to keep cover behind rocks and trees, being on foot until through his glass he got a fair idea of the position of Conrad's train.

He saw plainly that five determined men with repeating guns could hold the pass against a charge of ten times their number. And even if flanked and they were approached by the rear the defenders had the same advantage.

His face wore a serious look when he rejoined his men.

They're too well posted for an open attack. To conquer, there are but two chances, without risking heavy loss. One is to creep in on them in the darkness and take 'em hand to hand. The other to starve them out. We can block both ends of the trap they're in and they can't get out, no easier than we can get in. Out in the open with lots of grass and game we can live in clover as long as we like!"

"Not if we wake up a few more nests of Apaches, and get the whole tribe at us," growled Jones, who didn't like his additional wound any too well, and felt as ugly as a wounded grizzly.

"We'll make camp here anyway," said Raymond. "It is as good a place as any. Four of you take post well down toward the gorge, just out of rifle-shot, and keep watch under cover, till you are relieved. One mounted man will patrol across our position a quarter of a mile in the rear."

His orders were at once obeyed, the horses, under guard, put out to graze, and small camp-fires built.

All these preparations for a stay could be seen from the outposts which Tombstone Dick established, to guard the approach to the gorge.

And the noble fellow was much worried thereby. He had no knowledge that friends of his were taking measures for the relief of Mr. Conrad, and the punishment of the murderous band in his front; and he knew that though he might stand a siege while forage for his animals lasted, yet when that gave out, he would be powerless to move, even if he were free to go, for his teams and saddle-horses unfed, would weaken and die.

But he put on a cheerful front, and told Mr. Conrad, his daughter and his mother, to put their trust in God and fear not—they'd pull through yet.

CHAPTER XXX.

AN OFFER.

THINKING by a show of force and giving evidence of holding his post in front of them, he might drive them into a rash retreat which would place them in his power, Raymond paraded all his men as near the gorge as they could without being in danger of a long-range shot, barricaded the front to his camp and made his preparations for a long stay, apparently.

When night came on, his fires were spread over quite a large space, and though no light was visible in the gorge, he felt that he must be watched from there by anxious and weary eyes. He had made up his mind, if he could not safely assault them, or drive them out of their stronghold, he would hold them till want or the loss of their animals threw them in his power. He made various plans, but hesitated in their adoption. One was to send in a flag of truce, boldly announce his presence and offer a compromise. If Magdalena Conrad would marry him, he would make peace and disband his outlaw force. But a few moments' thought told him that the repugnance she had always exhibited toward him, would but be heightened by this exhibition of power founded on lawless associations.

That night, well guarded by sentinels, he slept well and sound. He felt as if his plans were near their culmination and he looked upon his success as assured.

In the cavern within the gorge there were sleepless eyes and aching hearts. Poor Magdalena felt as if their case was desperate. Though she had not seen him, at least so as to recognize him, she felt sure that her father's arch enemy headed the outlaw band who barred the way to her intended home. Mr. Conrad was of the same opinion.

Tombstone Dick, though cheerful, was serious, for he felt ill inclined to bear the restraint and delay forced upon him.

His men, brave though they were, could not but feel that vast odds stood before them and that numbers of reckless men were not to be regarded as trifling obstacles between them and the end of their journey.

The night had passed without alarm. The train-guards had good cover and kept within it—the outlaws had no desire to get within range of weapons which had already proved fatal to two of their comrades.

After the light of another day shone on his camp, Raymond sent out three of his best men with pack-horses, to hunt and kill game and bring it in for camp use. They left as soon as breakfast was over, with orders to return when each had succeeded in getting a load of fresh meat.

After they were gone, Raymond thought he would at least see how Mr. Conrad was bearing his detention.

Writing a note, he asked in it if the merchant did not feel like entering into negotiations for permission to continue his journey. If so, he had certain conditions to offer, which once accepted, would raise the siege and allow him to go on his way in peace.

This note he signed with his own name, and sent with a single unarmed man holding a white flag in his hand toward the party in the gorge.

The man advanced until where Pete Parkerton had received his fatal shot, and there, holding the flag in one hand and waving the letter

with the other, he waited the will of the leader in the gorge.

Tombstone Dick wanted to send a bullet through the truce-bearer's heart, but Mr. Conrad, wishing to know what was proposed, got him to send out a single man to learn what was wanted.

The man brought in a note directed to Ovid Conrad, Esquire.

The old merchant turned whiter than the snowy foam of the cascade when the superscription met his eye.

"You were right, Magdalena, in your belief," he said. "That arch-fiend is the leader of that band of desperadoes, most likely hired with the money that he stole from me."

"See what he writes. Let us know what he means," was her stern response.

He read the note through in silence.

"He wishes to negotiate. He says he holds our lives in his power, but we are free on conditions he will name, if I will meet and talk with him, you alone to accompany me. All to meet unarmed."

"Never!—never will we condescend to negotiate with a wretch like him. I will kill him with less compunction than I would feel for shooting a mad-dog!" cried the indignant girl. "Do not demean yourself by answering his note in writing. Let our messenger tell his, our rifles will negotiate for us."

"Bravely said, fair lady!" cried Dick Hartman, with flashing eyes. "Fear not but we will triumph over such men. The Great Spirit is the Father of good, and He will not let the evil crush us. You give me—you give us all good heart!"

This simple message was sent back by the man who brought the note:

"We negotiate only with our rifles; they will do our talking."

Raymond breathed an angry curse when he heard the answer.

"They seal their own doom!" he muttered. "I will show no mercy now!"

Ten minutes later he was on his horse, rallying his men for flight, and heading south as he led the advance, fleeing from danger.

His hunters had gone but a short distance up a valley which looked promising for game. When they saw, a long rifle-shot in advance of them, a large and compact body of men who were evidently following up the old trail their party had made coming in.

"The Vigilantes from Tombstone!" they cried.

And turning their horses they put them at their top speed and rushed back to Raymond's camp.

"The Vigilantes from Tombstone!" they shouted as they dashed into camp. "Two to our one, they are close on our trail!"

In a second all were panic-stricken in the camp.

"To horse, and follow me!" shouted Raymond.

CHAPTER XXXI.

DELIVERANCE.

"WHAT in the name of created light can be the matter with the outlaw gang?" cried Tombstone Dick, who stood near the entrance of the gorge with Mr. Conrad, Magdalena and his mother near him. "They mount and are dashing away at full speed, as if on a regular stampede! Look! See them go—they are in disorder, every man seems terror-stricken!"

"It may be Indians in large force are on them, or close at hand!" said Magdalena.

"More likely it is Marshal Boyd and a posse of his men in chase of them! He said he would never rest until he had that villain ironed in his grasp!" cried Mr. Conrad.

The camp was deserted by every outlaw in less than three minutes from the first moment.

"It may be they are only setting a trap to draw us out—appear to go off until we leave our stronghold, then return to cut us off!" said Magdalena, thoughtfully.

"No—no—look, there come the men who have startled them! They are friends—friends. Mr. Hines is at their head—see on his large gray horse!"

Mr. Conrad almost broke down as he shouted out these words and then he and Tombstone Dick and Magdalena followed by Mrs. Hartman ran out on foot where they could be seen.

On jaded horses which could hardly be forced out of a walk, the relief party came on to meet those they were only too glad to see alive.

"Where is Marshal Boyd?" was the first question asked by Mr. Conrad of his friend Hines.

"We buried his body and that of thirteen of his brave companions who were all ambuscaded and butchered by the infernal outlaw gang whom we are after. Where are they? We sighted some not a quarter of an hour ago!"

"They have fled! On fresh horses they are beyond your present reach!" was the answer.

"They had us hemmed in, but we have held our own and killed two of them and wounded another, without losing a man or getting a scratch on our side!"

The rescuers, as we may well term the Tomb-

stone men, had come on day and night till men and animals were literally used up. Rest, food and forage were now all that could recuperate them.

They went into camp, right where the outlaws had halted, with wood, water and grass in profusion about them. And Tombstone Dick, now confident in numbers and arms, had his train pulled out from the "Fort" as Magdalena named the Cascade Cavern, and all camped together.

It was a delightful meeting to the members of Mr. Conrad's train. Their animals could not have lasted long on only the grain ration left, and then without grass they must have perished, or been driven out for the outlaws to capture. It was a dark outlook for them.

Now all was changed and Richard of Tombstone, could cry with Richard of York:

"Now is the winter of our discontent
Made glorious summer by this new arrival,
And all the clouds that lowered upon our house,
Are—with the vile outlaws gone and scattered."

A slight change from Shakespeare, but more appropriate to present times and circumstances.

Mr. Conrad was well supplied with stores, and he lavishly supplied the brave men from Tombstone with the best he had.

Guards were set, of course, but so large a party had little cause for fear from either outlaws or red-skins.

The rest of that day was given to repose and rest for wearied man and beast. They knew that the outlaws would go far beyond all present reach of pursuit before they stopped, if indeed they did stop within the bounds of Arizona. Pursuit by such a large body must have told them how the people were aroused, and no longer would they be safe within the borders of the Territory.

Two days and nights passed before the men and horses of the Tombstone party were fully in trim again for motion and action.

Then, Mr. Conrad being anxious to push forward on his journey, a council was held as to the future movement of both parties.

Tombstone Dick had followed the trail of the outlaws with a half-dozen of his mounted guards for a full half-day. It bore due south, and they had not once halted as far as he followed the trail. This he could see by their scattered tracks of flight.

Satisfied that they were driven off, he was not afraid to start right on and continue his trip without reinforcement.

To this Mr. Hines would not listen. They were fully half-way to the end of the journey it was true, but not out of danger, he said, and as he had come so far, he was not going back until he had seen his old friend safe all the way through.

About half his party decided to stay with him and act as an additional escort to Mr. Conrad's train.

The rest, most having left important business at home, resolved to return to Tombstone when the train went on, their horses having got new life up to their knees in rich grass, and with all the cool mountain spring water they wanted.

And so, the third morning after rescue came, the train moved on, while the rest of the party headed for Tombstone.

CHAPTER XXXII.

PANIC.

WHEN Raymond, smitten with panic as well as the rest of his men, dashed away, the foremost in his column, listening but for a second to the shouts of the "Vigilantes" as they rode after his fleeing hunters, he had no thought but to escape. The massacre of Boyd and his party must have been discovered by these men who followed up his trail, and he knew not less than his death and the utter extermination of his band would satisfy them.

They rode on madly for many miles, without any order or connection, though one common fear kept them in sight of each other.

In truth, it was along afternoon, when reaching a hill from which he could look back for miles, Raymond halted to breathe his horse and see where his pursuers were; whether he must stand and fight or try to push his tired and trembling horse still forward.

To his surprise and partly to his shame, over an expanse of at least fifteen miles he could not see a horseman except the stragglers of his own party now closing up.

The thought, for the first time, struck him, that the Tombstone men had in their anger ridden so far and fast, their horses were too much worn down to enable the riders to follow him and his band up. Most likely they had halted as soon as they discovered Mr. Conrad and his train.

"Fools and cowards! That's what we are—myself included!" he cried as he threw himself off his horse and waited for the men to rally where he stopped.

"What for? Gettin' out of the way of an army of Vigilantes who'd burn us alive if once they laid hands on us?" growled Jones, who despite his lame shoulder, being well mounted, had kept up with the leader. "Jim Reynolds, who saw 'em so near they yelled out his name and

shot at him, said there must have been a hundred comin' full split on our trail!"

"They're not in sight now and we can look back over ground we've taken two hours to cover!" said Raymond. "I guess they've run down their stock and had to halt to rest!"

"Maybe so!" said Jones doubtfully. "But I wouldn't trust too much to that. They may halt to have a confab with the men we corralled in the gorge—maybe to feed up and rest a bit. But that they'll give up chasin' us, I don't believe. And the more distance we make before we camp, the better I'll feel!"

"So would I, if I didn't think they had given up the chase," said Raymond. "If they have quit our trail we're going right away from them we were after, and who but for this last arrival were in our power!"

"Well, boss—if you want to stay, or to go back, no one of us will stop you. But I don't believe there's a man that hears me will follow you!"

"Bet your last red, right there!" said one of the best men in the crowd. "We can fight when there's half a chance, but this facin' a hundred red-hot Vigilantes isn't the kind o' crow I eat. It isn't in our contract, boss!"

Raymond saw he had not a single backer if he halted there, or even turned back to reconnoiter. So after his horse had got wind, he rode on at a steady gait until near night and then camped where there was a pool of brackish water, but little grass and no wood but a few green willows over the water-hole.

It mattered not. The men didn't need any fire. They were literally demoralized. If Raymond hadn't issued a double ration of liquor some of them would have crept away and deserted in the dark. The leader had the stern good sense to keep all the stores under his own eye and he swore he would shoot the first man who touched a ration of food or drink that was not regularly served out to him.

In the morning stiff and sore, hungry too for their provisions had run quite low, they mounted, packed what stores they had left on the mules and moved on south. Every time they surmounted a ridge or hill they looked back, but saw no sign of pursuit.

About noon this day, having reached the mouth of a little gulch or valley out of which flowed a small stream of cool pure water, Raymond saw a gang of elk feeding on a grassy swell in range of his Winchester.

Two rapid shots from his rifle as he rode in advance of his party brought down a noble bull and a fat yearling and the men were contented now to go into camp and feast and rest.

Very hungry men will dare a good deal for a square meal and when he pointed out what a good place it was for defense, if they should be attacked, they stopped and prepared to camp without a word of dissent.

The slain elk were skinned and dressed, the camp-fires built in a nook surrounded by high rocks and bushes, beside the stream and the horses turned to grass a little way up the valley where they were literally fenced in by high cliffs that rose either side of the stream.

A mounted sentinel, to be relieved every two hours was left on a knoll a mile in the rear which as long as light lasted commanded an extended view.

Once more the men began to act like themselves and Raymond began to think ere long he would get them on the trail—if not directly back on one which might yet head off Mr. Conrad before he could reach the safety of his mining-camp.

He missed Pete Parkerton a good deal. With all his faults, he was useful. He had a good deal of influence over the men and kept them in good humor with quaint stories and an occasional song.

Jones was rough, brave and a good fighter when once into it. His recent bad luck in getting hit every time he went under fire, didn't add to his good humor, but Raymond knew he would stick if once fairly engaged.

With rousing fires, juicy meats, fine water, the camp was a jolly one for tired and hungry men, and for once Raymond went to sleep on his blankets without listening to any grumbling.

The mounted sentinel was called in for the night at dark, and only a camp and horse guard kept close at hand.

The men rested well, woke rested and refreshed and ready to stow away more rations of juicy elk-steak.

A general council was held after breakfast and upon Raymond proposing it, the men agreed to stay there that day, kill some more game, jerk the meat over a slow fire and if not disturbed, on the next day to strike out on a new course and try and intercept the Conrad train before it reached the mine.

Their horses rested and well fed could be pushed and easily make double if not three times the distance in a day, that the wagons could go over.

That was a busy day in camp. A band of black-tailed deer was sighted close to them, and the hunters, creeping upon them against the wind, killed six of the largest in a few minutes. And then to dress, cut in flakes, and dry and smoke the meat, so it would keep for use on the

march was quite a labor, but one the men liked right well.

Thinking so much of the recent danger when the Vigilantes pursued them, the leader and his men had been altogether careless of another danger. They had forgotten that Apaches might be around, eager to avenge the recent slaughter of so many of their tribe. If they had thought of it, they would not have built fires by day that sent up columns of smoke which could be seen for many miles in every direction.

In the night which followed this day they paid for this gross neglect of common care in an Indian country.

They had turned in early, feeling safe, putting out but a single sentinel. When they supped, meat was cooked also for breakfast, for the order was given that they would saddle up and pull out at daybreak.

About midnight, when every man was asleep in camp, there was a sudden rush of hoofs which sounded like the thunder of a cavalry charge in their ears, waking every man and bringing him to his feet.

At first, half-dazed, the men did not understand it, but when every horse and mule belonging to the band went by in stampede, out of the valley into the open plains, and with them a score or more of yelling Indians—then they knew what carelessness had cost them.

They had not an animal to move with. Saddles, packs, stores, ammunition they had in the camp, but no beasts to bear them away.

The rest of the night watching and expecting an attack from the Apaches, who, mounted, could ride where they pleased, Raymond and his men kept afoot, angry and miserable.

All the blame was put on Raymond now.

He was the leader, and should have put out sufficient guard at least to save their stock. They did not think of the careless smoke which would draw Indians to their position, and enable spies to see where their animals fed, unguarded and scarcely looked at. They blamed him for not thinking, while they had eaten, drank, played cards and slept without a thought of peril in their own minds.

At daylight they had a full chance to realize their danger. Indians were all around them. Out on the plains they could see the red warriors dashing about on their captured horses. They were confident because well mounted, while the white men were on foot—also because in numbers they were at least four or five to one.

Worst of all, Raymond saw that his band was completely surrounded. Indians were in his rear, their sentinels on every cliff in sight which overlooked their encampment.

"Be careful of the provisions, men!" was his first order. "The red thieves, if they do not dare to charge in upon us, will try to starve us out!"

"They're itchin' for our hair, and they're like to get it!" growled Jones, moodily. "It's about as well. I'd just as quick die as to live on, sufferin' as I do. This last bullet is 'most killin' me. My shoulder is swelled like a puff-ball."

He tore his shirt back and exposed the wound, horribly inflamed.

"The bullet has got to come out. If you'll let me probe to see where it is, I'll try to relieve you!" said Raymond, kindly.

"Set double guards out first, then give me a pint of whisky and go ahead," was the answer.

With all his force under arms, and a good part advanced from the camp, Raymond did all he then could for defense, and now attempted his act of surgery.

He had no proper probe, but he peeled a slender willow wand, about two feet long, and rounded off the end. Then administering a large dose of whisky to his patient, he wet the wand in lukewarm water and inserted it in the inflamed orifice made by the rifle-ball.

The torture was intense as the probe was passed carefully but firmly in until it touched a hard substance.

At first Raymond thought it was the bone of the shoulder-blade, but pushing a little harder, the substance moved, and he knew it was the ball, and below the shoulder-blade.

Carefully he estimated the course and distance as he withdrew the probe and measured the length it had gone in.

"Keep up heart, old man," he said. "I can get that bullet out, clean out the wound, and, healing from inside, you'll be well inside of three weeks."

"Ay or in —" *sheol* they call it now. "Go ahead and do your work. Don't you see I've sand enough to stand it?" said Jones.

"Yes—you are all grit! Now—keep still. I don't think the ball is more than an inch deep here below your shoulder-blade, just above the lung. By good luck not a bone has been touched. The bullet went just below. One of you men get me a pot of the coldest spring water you can find, cut this linen handkerchief up in strips an inch wide and soak them in it."

While these orders were being obeyed, Raymond took a keen-bladed pocket-knife out, strapped the smallest blade on his gun-strap until it was keen as a razor.

Then pressing his finger in below the shoulder on the hot flesh till he thought he had located

the ball. Then—with one quick, firm thrust, he laid the flesh open down to the ball, which he felt with his knife.

The next instant it was between his thumb and finger and exhibited to the unflinching patient.*

"You're a cuss!" cried Jones, in a tone of intense relief. "Give me another drink and wash her out as you said you would."

Another cup of whisky steadied the nerves of Jones, and now making a wad of fine linen, dipping it in water almost ice cold, Raymond pushed it clean through the wound. When repeated, the second wad of linen came through comparatively clean. The internal bleeding was checked, the inflammation greatly lessened.

A cold water compress on the two openings completed the operation and Jones felt so easy that a smile stole out on his rugged face and he said:

"I'm all right, boss. You're just a head and neck ahead of any doctor this side of the great Divide. I should have died, with that bullet in where it was. It was worse than poison!"

"Now, men—we'll breakfast—one-half at a time. Make coffee, we'll need it. The other half stand to arms. There is no knowing what the Indians might try, if they see we are careless."

His men obeyed without a murmur. He had the master mind; they saw more of it now than ever before.

His relieving Jones when in such misery seemed to them like a miracle.

They made coffee, cooked meat and ate a meal, careful of waste. That is, one-half of them. Then taking their rifles, they relieved the other half and let them come in and eat.

Raymond, after breakfast, took his glass and getting the best position he could find for observation took careful note of the Indians, their position and numbers.

He saw off to the left where the creek on which he was encamped made a bend, quite a village was established. Tepees were up, smoke rose, showing the Apaches had fairly settled down for a siege.

Over the plain in scattered growth of twenty or thirty in a place mounted warriors watched his camp.

"We never can escape by fighting," he said to himself. "They are cunning enough to keep out of rifle-range. Were we to charge them, dismounted as we are, they'd cut us off from camp. Keep out of our way and we'd all be lost. It is a bad snap. There is but one hope and that is diplomacy. If I could see their chief—I might buy peace from him. Ay—perhaps co-operation! Then good by to hope, Mr. Conrad. I'd have you, mines and all. With such a force as there is out there, joined to my men, what could I not do? Their Vigilantes would be no more than dry grass before a prairie fire!"

It almost made him wild to think of it. But how to approach the wily, fierce and untamed Apache—the most cruel, the most treacherous of their race. That was a hard question for him to solve.

The first thing was to show courage and utter indifference to the vicinity of their enemies.

He kept his fires burning—only half his men on guard, but the others were busy inside the fringe of bushes strengthening his camp and making a kind of rock-fort which they could use at night, resting within, in safety, and needing only a few sentinels. It also secured the provisions and stores.

The day passed with no incident of a startling nature. The Indians would parade in bands of forty or fifty, just out of range, shaking their guns and lances, and uttering yells of hate and defiance.

But no powder was wasted on either side.

"They can stand it a heap longer than we can!" said Jones, when Raymond asked him how long he thought that sort of thing would be kept up. Then he added: "The reds are at home, you see, sir. There's plenty of game outside of them—they have all the wood and water they want and grass for six months to come!"

"While we, with care and on short rations, cannot hold out over three weeks at most!" said Raymond.

"My shoulder will be well afore then!" said Jones. "And I don't propose to starve to death. It's not my style. If it comes to the worst, we'll go at 'em, kill all we can and go under like men!"

"I may save us all by a better plan!"

"I'd like to size it up. What is it?"

"To see their chief under a flag of truce and buy peace of him, maybe get him to work with us and clean out Conrad, mine and all!"

"Bosh! They'll shoot down the man that tried to show a white flag. I know the cusses—I do. They're after us not only for bein' white men but in revenge for the warriors we killed the other day. They'll never be content till they lift every scalp on our heads!"

"If they fire on the flag, they'll fire on me. I'll ask no man to incur a danger I shrink from!"

* The author describes an operation precisely as performed by himself, when a young lieutenant in the Florida war, on a scouting expedition with no surgeon along. He saved a good man's life by the rude surgery.

"We need you, boss. You musn't try it. I'm not good for much, but if any one must go, let me be the man. They'll see my arm in a sling and they'll know I can't fight! They might hold off, just for that!"

"I shall not allow the risk to you. I will go, with arms concealed and if I see a sign of treachery fight my way back to the cover of our guns!"

The night passed with but one alarm. A spy crept near the outer sentinel, but was discovered and fired upon. He escaped.

Next morning Raymond revealed his plans to his men. They feared he might be killed, but no one could alter his purpose. Boldly, an hour after all had breakfasted, he put a white handkerchief on a small pole and walked out on the plain. There was a good deal of excitement over at the village among the Indians when the flag was seen. Then—a woman with a white flag on a lance was seen to leave the largest tepee and advance.

Nearer and nearer, with stately step, she advanced toward Raymond.

"Great Heaven!" he gasped. "It is Ignacia de Salvo!"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

OVERTURES.

SHE stopped short when he spoke. Her dark eyes opened first in wonder, then flashed with fury. Her tall, superb form dressed in Indian style, was drawn to its utmost height.

"Ingrate, traitor, deserter of a loving wife and helpless babe! Is it you? I, Ignacia—an Apache slave, will go back to them and tell them to show you no mercy!"

"Stop—for the sake of our boy Manolo, stop!"

"MANOLO? He is dead!"

Tears filled the flashing eyes and her harsh voice grew more soft.

"He lives! Five days ago I sent him to a place of safety with my watch and chain around his neck that cost me one thousand dollars gold, and in his pocket yet a thousand more!"

"Can you speak the truth?"

"I swear by that cross upon your breast, I do—and I swear if the Apaches will bear me, and let me buy your freedom, you shall go to him, or he shall come to you."

"Yet I saw him shot through and through with an arrow."

"Yes; but he was rescued by the white warriors—cowboys they call them—carried in and doctored, and nursed back to life and health by a white lady."

"Your wife, maybe?" and the woman's eyes flashed once more.

"No—a lady, almost a stranger to me. I met him by accident, but he was so like you, I knew him at once, and my heart went out to him in love, and I gave him all that I have told you, and promised him more. He thinks you are dead—his heart will bound with joy if he hears you are alive. It is full of sorrow now."

The woman paled and flushed by turns. She trembled with agitation, which she tried in vain to suppress.

"I will try to believe you," she said at last. "Now tell me what you want with Geronimo? He is chief there."

She pointed back to the village.

"He sent me here, because I speak your tongue. He is very angry. You killed a band of his warriors a few days ago. He will take scalp for scalp—life for life. What message am I to carry back?"

"Tell him I would buy peace from him. I have money. I can pay him twenty thousand dollars in hand."

"He will say he can get it without asking you. You are surrounded. You have no animals. You cannot hunt. When what meat you have is gone, you will starve. He knows it, and will wait."

"He will not get my money. If I must starve or fight I will destroy it first. Go and tell him so. And say we will not wait till we are weak with hunger, to fight him. If we must fight—we will do it soon. He will lose many warriors. We are well armed with rifles and revolvers and knives. We have no lack of ammunition. In our stone fort we could hold off three times as many warriors as he has."

"He has more coming. Two more bands will soon be here."

"We care not. If he will not make peace we will fight. We can but die."

"You are chief of your party?"

"Yes, I am the leader. I alone have the money. Even my men do not know how much."

"I will tell Geronimo what you say."

"One moment, wait. Are you his wife?"

"His wife?" came back in a tone of ringing scorn. "Once, when I was young and beautiful and rich, Holy Church made me your wife. Though you robbed me of all I had, deserted me and my helpless babe, I have been true to my vows. In sorrow and distress, even in slavery, with death staring me in the face, I have known no husband but you!"

Her voice fell low, tears welled from her eyes as she said again:

"I will go and tell Chief Geronimo what you offer, and do all I can for you and your men!"

Go back to your camp and rest. There is no use in your staying here. He is slow to think as still water. When he acts it is like the rush of a torrent. If you see this flag again—it will be to talk of peace. If not—it will be war to the death!"

"And you—will I not see you again?"

He spoke in a voice low and tender—such a voice as once won her to give her very soul away to him.

She trembled from head to foot and did not turn around to look at him. She dared not pause or turn back. But her voice, in a mournful cadence, reached his ear:

"It will be as God wills."

"What is the news? Is there any chance of dealing with the red cusses?" asked Jones, in hearing of many of the men, when Raymond returned to camp.

"There is a chance, that is all. Geronimo, the deadliest foe to the white race in the Apache nation, is at the head of this band. Two more bands will soon be here, and if I do not succeed in buying peace of him, we are doomed!"

"Curse him, yes. I know him of old. He has roasted a captive alive, cut out his heart and chewed it up!"

"The woman who came with the flag will do all she can for us," said Raymond. "She was sent because she could speak English. She is a Mexican and a captive, but treated well, I know, by the way she looked. She was dressed richly, like an Indian queen. I knew her years ago in Santa Fe. She will urge Geronimo to make peace with us. She has powerful reasons to do her best for us. She wants to see her son."

"Her son?"

"Yes, the half-breed who brought me the warning from Calamity Jane that saved us from a surprise by Boyd and his party."

"Manolo?"

"Yes, Manolo, who was once a captive in this very band, and was rescued in a fight the cowboys made."

Jones was silent from surprise.

"How soon will we know—how soon will old Geronimo decide?" he asked, at last.

"It is hard to tell. She said he was very slow to decide on a matter, but like lightning to act, when once he has decided. I was told to come back and wait. If I saw the flag again, to go out alone to meet it."

"Good—we will hope for the best. If I wasn't an everlasting old sinner, I'd try to h'iste up a prayer. As it is, I'll light a pipe and smoke for peace, as the red-skins do."

Two, three hours or more went by. All the warriors except a few vedettes left to watch the white men's camp were called into the village. The great drum of the "Medicine Man" was heard. It was plain that the Indians were in council.

The sun had crossed its meridian and cast its shadows eastward, when Jones cried out to Raymond, who sat dozing as he leaned against a rock in the shade:

"Their white flag is out, boss, and a big chief in all his high feather rides in rear of the woman who carries it."

Raymond sprung to his feet, took up his flag, and hurried on.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A COMPACT.

RAYMOND strode out to his former position, with a proud and defiant look on his face. He had put on the best garments that he had and though apparently unarmed, had a large revolver in each of his high-topped cavalry boots—a derringier up each of his sleeves in a position to slip to his hands at a motion and a knife hidden under his padded vest.

He did not mean that the Apache chief should see a sign of fear in his demeanor.

When within ten feet of Ignacia, who stood just in front of Geronimo, who sat grimly on his horse, Raymond halted and folding his arms over his breast, stood beside his plug.

He had planted the heel of the staff in the sand. For he wanted his hands free. He saw that not only did Geronimo carry a lance, but that he wore a knife and tomahawk in his belt.

Geronimo spoke in Apache to Ignacia, looking fiercely at Raymond.

"What does he say?" asked Raymond.

"He asks if you are a coward, to stand so far off?" she answered.

"Tell him no—but when a man comes armed with lance, tomahawk and knife to talk of peace under a white flag, it behooves a prudent man to stand where he cannot be struck down with his eyes shut!"

Ignacia repeated the words. Geronimo stopped to think before he answered and Raymond asked in a low tone:

"Does he know you are my wife?"

"No!" she answered. "Not yet."

Geronimo, who was as fierce and repulsive in look as Nature could make him, waited two or three minutes before he spoke, eyeing Raymond from head to foot. Then, with flashing eyes he uttered words which Raymond knew were threatening, by his looks and gestures.

Ignacia, pale and tremulous repeated the words:

"He says," she said, "you speak big words

from a small mouth. They may choke you. He asks what hinders him from throwing his lance through you where you stand?"

"These!" cried Raymond, as he straightened out each arm and held a cocked pistol in each hand looking the chief full in the face. "I am ready for treachery. If he moves hand or foot he dies!"

Geronimo did not move. Not a muscle in his face quivered, not even an eyelash moved. He sat full a minute looking at the muzzles which held an ounce ball within their dark depths.

Then a grim smile stole over his swarthy face. He spoke again and in a milder tone. She repeated his words in English.

"The white man is a great brave. Geronimo will talk with him!"

He threw lance, knife and hatchet to the ground, and dismounting, walked toward Raymond.

The latter laid his two derringers at the foot of his flag-staff and then advanced until he and the Apache were face to face.

The chief wore a fine woven blanket of scarlet, the product of some Mexican loom. He laid it down on the ground and took his seat on the further end.

He pointed to the further end and motioned to Raymond to take a seat.

The latter did so. Then, with the utmost deliberation, the chief took a pipe from his belt—a pipe of the famous red-stone, and from a pouch made of rattlesnake skin he took tobacco to fill it.

This done, he struck a light with flint and steel, lighted the tobacco, took a whiff and blew it in the air for each point of the compass. Then he offered the pipe to Raymond.

The latter took a whiff from it, then passed it back. The chief took it, smoked in silence for several minutes, then motioned for Ignacia to stand near and interpret his words.

"We have smoked the pipe of peace. What has the white brave to say to Geronimo?" were his first words, after sitting down for conference.

"That I want peace between us. We met your warriors in battle. I and my men killed some of them. They would have killed us, but we got the first fire. We are sorry. We are willing to pay for those lives. The price of five ponies for every man and blankets for his widows and children. What more can we do? We cannot call back life. We cannot raise the dead."

Ignacia faithfully translated every word.

Geronimo smoked in silence a little while.

Then he answered:

"My brother speaks truth. The hearts of my warriors are very sore. They are angry because good men have gone down in death. They are buried in waters that run but one way. But, warriors know but one path to the spirit-land."

He paused, smoked, and handed the pipe to Raymond.

Then he went on:

"My warriors say, give us one hundred ponies, or their price in money; three hundred blankets, twenty pounds of powder, one hundred rounds of lead. They will give back the white men's horses; they will not stop them, but let them go where they will. Geronimo has spoken!"

Raymond took a pencil from his pocket. He estimated the ponies at ten dollars each—an outside price; the blankets at four dollars, about market rate. The powder and lead, and a present of tobacco for all, at one hundred dollars more. Only about twenty-three hundred dollars, where he had expected to expend as many thousands! He was only too glad to get off so easy. Yet, he appeared to study over the figures. At last, through Ignacia he said:

"I will pay it all and in money, so my brother can buy for himself and not be cheated. I have all my brother wants in gold and silver in the camp—more yet in the paper money of the pale-faces. And if my brother, the great Geronimo, will listen to me, I have a way he can walk where he can pick up gold at every step."

Ignacia faithfully translated each word.

The chief began to show an eager interest. He had been conceded all he asked for—now there was a promise of more.

"My ears are open!" he said.

"When I met the Apache warriors they stood between me and a man who is my enemy. He is rich. He owns mines of gold and silver, with machines to work them. He would have been my prisoner, and I could have made my own terms, but for your men, who stood in my way. When I had to fight them, he heard the sound of battle and knew where I was. And he went on with his train and sent for friends to help him, and so he went out of my reach. I have not given him up. I never leave a trail when once I am on it. I want help now from the great Geronimo. I will pay him the price of five hundred ponies, and give him half of what we conquer!"

The chief paused, refilled his pipe, smoked a few minutes, and then, through Ignacia, said:

"Let my brother bring first the price of peace. Then he can go with me to my council and talk with my warriors. If they will go, Geronimo will lead them!"

Raymond rose, and leaving his flag and pistols where they were, hurried to his camp. He had got near three thousand dollars in gold and silver, and of this he took all he had promised to Geronimo.

"All is right, boys," he said to his men. "Yet still stand on guard. I am going to the Indian village. When I come back, I will bring your horses."

And he returned fearlessly to the spot where yet the two truce-flags were planted.

He laid the money down before Geronimo.

Gravely the latter counted it, and pronounced it right.

Then, while he was replacing the money in the bag in which Raymond had brought it, Ignacia said a word for herself.

"You are rich! I am a slave! Do you mean to leave me with the Apache?"

"No, Ignacia, no! If he will take a ransom, I will pay it. Ask him!"

"The white man would restore me to my people. He would buy my liberty. Will Geronimo name a price?" she said.

The chief heard her words with astonishment. Since she thought her son was dead, she had never cared for any freedom. She had seemed like one of his own family.

With wonder he asked:

"Would Ignacia leave her friends? She is no slave. She is like a sister in the tepec of Geronimo. If she wants to go, her will is her own. If she would stay, no want will be unheeded. She is free!"

Ignacia bowed her head and crossed her hands over her bosom.

"Geronimo is great and good!" she said.

"This man is my husband—the father of my son Monolo. I have not seen him for many years until to-day. He tells me my son lives. I would go to see him. He will pay for my freedom. I am his, by the will of the Great Spirit!"

"Geronimo has no more to say. Go with your husband when he leaves our council!"

It was all settled. The chief took up his flag, waved it horizontally, and a band of warriors, who had watched his every motion all this time, now galloped up.

Two of these were ordered to dismount and into the vacant saddles Raymond and Ignacia mounted and with the chief rode to the village.

Then the great drum resounded, the head warriors were called together and the settlement of the present quarrel proclaimed—the price exhibited which insured peace for the present. Then the new proposition was made, after a brief debate accepted and Geronimo announced himself and his band as allied to the white men.

And Ignacia, proud of the brave, fearless-looking man, who stood so grand among that band of warriors, felt forgetful of all her dark past and joyous in the thought that her son lived and she would see him once more, moved like a queen among the women of the tribe.

In a little while, as ordered by the Apache chief, every horse and mule that had been stampered from the outlaw camp was brought up and when Raymond was ready to ride back with Ignacia, his acknowledged wife, the dusky escort drove the animals on in his rear.

Thus, in triumph, Raymond returned to his camp, his men hardly able to realize that through his able management they were out of peril and no impediments lay before them.

Little did they know how much of this they owed to Ignacia, the mother of Manolo. Her influence used in their favor—her words pleading at first with Geronimo to listen, did it all.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE WINDING WAY.

THERE was wild rejoicing in the outlaw camp that night. Men who had believed themselves doomed, who thought their escape impossible, wondered when they saw their own horses feeding close by in peace and knew that though fully three hundred warriors were almost within rifle-shot, not one would lift a hostile hand.

All Jones could say was:

"There's no use talkin'! The boss is a trump ace in a full pack—he leads all the men that ever kicked. We can't do no better than shut our eyes after this and go just where he tells us—he is boss, and that's all there is of it!"

With extra rations all around and no outpost duty to perform, the men were all happy. They were told that the next morning they were to move, with the Indians, or a war-party of them in company, and they cared not where. They were willing to "go it blind" under such a leader.

Alone, in a tent made of blankets, apart from the main camp, Ignacia in renewed fondness for the only man she had ever loved, forgetful of his past deceit and the misery that followed, sat and asked questions about Manolo, her son, how he looked, how he talked, how he acted. Such is woman's blind idolatry—such a mother's love.

And he—the man known to us as Raymond, did his evil past, or his wild and wrong ambition for the future, trouble him now? If so he was too wise to show it. Just free from a death-encompassed peril, he lived in that present and tried for the time at least to make the woman happy who had saved him.

The next morning at an early hour, Geronimo was at the camp. With him came the band of picked warriors who were in future to act with Raymond's men. But before they went, the latter had to perform his part of the bargain—pay over the sum agreed upon.

This was done in greenbacks. Geronimo knew their value. He coolly said he had taken thousands of dollars from the bodies of white men he and his men had slain and never found trouble in getting gold or silver for them when he sent in by neutrals to the towns and trading-posts.

After the financial part of the contract was made, there had to be a grand feast. That was followed by a war-dance. No party of red-skins ever went on the war-path with any confidence, without they led off with a war-dance.

These matters took the entire day. The next day was set apart for the start and the course to take and all arrangements were made and understood between Raymond and Geronimo the evening previous.

At the very break of day, the Indian warriors, fifty strong, drew up where Raymond had just broken camp. And ere the sun rose, the red-men in the van and the whites close up, the force going nearly West, through a mountain gorge known only to the Indians, on a course which it was hoped would intercept Conrad's train before it reached the Magdalena mine.

Raymond before starting had tried to induce Ignacia to remain behind in the Apache camp, promising to come back after her. But her veto was issued to that. Reunited, she vowed that death alone should separate them now. So, riding near Raymond, mostly by his side, she went on with the party—the only woman in the crowd.

Geronimo was out for war—his wives were all left behind. He could have taken three times as many warriors on the expedition had he chosen to do so, but when told what force it was expected to meet, he scorned the idea of taking any more.

He was a brave and strong-willed chief and argued he wanted no more horses than could eat grass at one camp—no more men to kill game for, when their dried meat ran out, than just what were needed for victory. By signal he could call more warriors to his side if he should need them.

Raymond had but one trouble now. He felt sure of success with the aid of his new allies, but how Ignacia would take his action when he made Magdalena Conrad his captive was an annoying query to his mind—a disturbing element.

He had to use her as his interpreter when consulting Geronimo. And he had not yet dared to explain just what he wanted done when they intercepted and were ready to attack Mr. Conrad's train. Her renewed fondness, her wild and extravagant love worried him terribly. For he knew if she thought a rival was in her way—the reaction would be terrible. She seemed to have forgotten, as she said she had forgiven, his early desertion which he falsely had told her was forced on him by the trader St. Vrain—she lived again in the love of her youth, and in the father of Manolo, the son to whom she hoped soon to be reunited, found an image to worship.

Geronimo knew where the Magdalena mine was situated, had more than once meditated a descent upon it. Therefore, he knew the best route to take to cross the trail leading there.

Through deep and dark defiles, over sterile ranges where most likely the white man had never passed before, he led the way, and Raymond wondered often that they could make their way over points that looked impassable. But the Indians never faltered—on after their untiring leader, silent and grim, they rode, never pausing except when he did, or even exchanging a word, one with another.

They did not halt to noon, as he would have done, but kept on until the sun was within an hour of setting.

Then, descending the side of a steep mountain they reached a basin, or valley of almost oval form, surrounded—or so it looked—on every side by high, impassable cliffs. In its center was a small lake, whose clear waters seemed fathomless, for even close to the shore no bottom could be seen.

And it seemed alive with fish. They could be seen leaping up in all parts of it.

As the chief rode down a narrow trail into this lovely spot, where grass grew almost waist-high, a herd of lovely elks were seen close at hand, looking up and showing no alarm. It was evident the hunter had seldom if ever troubled them in that lovely and hidden pasture.

Geronimo spoke to two or three warriors near him and, darting forward on their agile ponies, they dashed in on the herd, and soon enough meat lay on the ground to serve the entire command for that night and another day.

"We rest here. Make camp. Tell your men to make fire from small, dry wood, that burns fast and does not smoke. They cook and eat—then fires go out. We are on the war-path!"

All this Geronimo communicated to Raymond through Ignacia, and he gave his orders to his

own men accordingly. They watched the Indian way of making fires and followed it.

Ignacia, as soon as Raymond halted, staked out his horse and her own in rich grass, brought in the saddle and blankets, and laid them under a leafy tree, allowing no one to serve him but herself.

From a pocket she drew a fish-line and hook, attached only a little bit of white rag to it and threw it over into the lake, not twenty feet from where she had laid his blankets.

Almost in a second she drew out a very large fish, one big enough for a meal for two or three persons. The water was all a-foam with others leaping for the hook that but one could take.

This fish she dressed, and with great juicy steaks from one of the young elks, broiled for Raymond and Geronimo, for the two leaders ate together.

She did not offer to eat until they had finished. Her long life among the Indians had got her into their ways completely.

The Indians also caught fish and gave of them freely to their white allies, who cooked in their style as soon as they saw how it was done.

The Indians gathered piles of small dry sticks, dug holes in the ground, just large enough for the fires they wished to use, and putting in a few sticks at a time, fired them, and in the hot, smokeless blaze, roasted their fish and meat.

The fire burned freely, made no smoke, and hardly left any ashes to show where it had been when they left camp.

Raymond no longer wondered that Indians could pass unseen through sections where white men would be discovered by many a careless sign. No smoke from their camp, no fire allowed alight after dark, no yelling or loud talk—a grim silence that meant "business," as Jones said, all the time, or when talking, only in a low tone, loud enough only to be heard by the person spoken to.

As this was the first day, and they could not yet be near the party they wished to intercept, Raymond thought such great caution unnecessary, and asked Geronimo, through Ignacia, why he used it.

"The Apache, when he is on the war-path, always goes so he may strike an enemy before he is seen," was the answer. "Only the Great Spirit knows who may be near—we always go as if our enemies are near. If they are not, we lose nothing by care. If they are—they will not know where we are till they hear the war-cry when we strike."

Raymond was learning a lesson. One, too, that only our Western soldiers learn by sad experience.

The whole band had supped heartily and well, and enough food was cooked for morning, before darkness was on them.

Just as twilight deepened, all horses were secured to short picket-lines, guards put out, and then without a glimmer of fire left, every man and warrior not out as a sentinel lay down to rest, except one who would at midnight call a relief for the guards.

No military camp would have shown better discipline than was here exhibited by the "untutored savage."

When the eastern star first came in view, every Indian warrior was astir, the horses put out in fresh grass, and the cold food cooked the night before was eaten for breakfast by the time day was dawning.

Thus, as soon as it was light enough to see, they were all ready for the march, for the white men fell at once into Indian ways, following the example of their red allies.

Before starting with the main body, Geronimo called out two tall, middle-aged warriors, and gave them an order.

Leaving all extra weight, even their blankets and lances, with only a bow and quiver of arrows to each, and a knife in belt, almost stripped, they nodded assent as they heard his orders, then on foot with wonderful speed dashed away over the hills in advance of the main party.

They were runners—men noted for speed and endurance, whom the chief sent ahead to strike the trail, and report to him at the camp he would make that night.

Such men never strike a blow, no matter if they sight the enemy; their duty is concealment, to see without being seen, to hear without being heard, to leave no trace where they pass, and to make their flight like that of a bird, swift and straight to and from the point to which they are sent.

Again, through gulch and ravine, over hills that looked and were nearly impassable, slowly but steadily Geronimo led the party on.

A little after noon Geronimo halted in a good place to rest and feed the horses. His orders were for all to eat heartily here, feed the stock and be ready to pass the night in a "dry camp."

That is where they would have no water for themselves or stock and would build no fires. He was fast nearing a point which would overlook the trail the train must pass over, if it had not gone by.

As Raymond trusted entirely to his guidance, he had not a word to say about changing any of the chief's plans—not yet at any rate.

After a wait of over two hours, which refreshed both men and animals, the party once more mounted and moved on.

It was almost dark when they halted on a bit of high table-land, a flat on a mountain, with only a little bunch-grass here and there and patches of chaparral.

Here the order was to picket horses short and to rest as best they could. There was but one trail down a fearfully steep mountain-side in their front. On this, and at the very verge of the steep path, Geronimo placed his blanket and waited for his runners to come in.

Raymond camped down close beside him near some bushes that broke off a cold wind which swept over them. Ignacia chose this spot for his blankets.

Along the whole line, by the time night set in, all was still.

Geronimo sat and watched for a time and then called to Ignacia in a low tone to ask her husband to look far away northward in a direction he indicated with his hand.

Raymond did so—and thought he saw a fire very distant—a light surely different from stars. Looking steadily, he saw at least three or four such lights and asked Geronimo, through his wife, what it meant.

"It is the camp of white men. They must feel strong, or they would not build such fires in the land of the Apache. They are half a sun away,* with good horses to make the distance. We will hear how many, by the time we are ready to go, maybe sooner yet!"

Raymond watched the fires for some time and saw them die down as night wore on. The campers had cooked their suppers and let them burn low when they needed them no longer.

After a time he saw but one and supposed it was a guard fire. Then he fell asleep. He was awakened along in the night, by the sharp cry of a coyote down the mountain, or he supposed it was that when he heard it repeated several times.

Geronimo was up on his feet, leaning on his lance and listening. Suddenly he answered the cry in a sound so natural, so much of an imitation of the animal, that Raymond was startled. It seemed as if a coyote barked at his side.

He knew in a moment what all this meant. Two tall forms were seen coming up out of the dark trail in the dim starlight, and he was aware the runners had returned.

For some time they talked in a low, guttural tone to their chief. Then they went among their people and lay down to rest and sleep.

Raymond, anxious to know what they had reported, asked Ignacia, whom he woke from slumber, to request Geronimo to tell him. He did so.

The train was on the road when they left it. They counted as many horses as he had warriors then with him. There were three wagons, and in one of them an old white-haired man and two women—one white, and young, the other an Indian woman—older, but not an Apache.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"SIGN."

"I AM so happy now, Mr. Hines," said Magdalena Conrad, as he rode along by the side of their ambulance three days later than that when he moved forward with their train.

"Any special reason for unusual happiness, my fair friend?" he asked.

"I feel so safe, with all these brave, strong men for an escort. And we go on faster, too. Men and animals seem to have new life in them. In a brief time we will be at the mines, and my father, busy in his new occupation, will forget past dangers and troubles. Once there, in his guarded and fortified home, he will be safe, too. I only wish your dear wife was here, and you were going to live with us. I should not be half so lonesome."

"She is far enough from civilization," said Mr. Hines, laughing. "And before you've been out in the San Rita Range a year you'll think so too."

"If I do, I'll hold my tongue about it," said Magdalena, laughing. "How near are we now to the mine?"

"Three days from to-day will see us there, if there is no break-down," said Mr. Hines. "Tombstone Dick is confident of it. We are now out of the hunting-ground mostly infested by Apaches, and he feels no anxiety about them. The worst of it is, we see hardly game enough to get a fresh bite for ourselves now and then. And that is the worst of a country rich in minerals. Hardly anything grows there for game to feed on, and you have to go to richer lands for feed and meat and forage. Ah! Dick is going to camp early to-night. I wonder what he means by that?"

The command had halted by a very small stream of clear water, fresh and cool, where there was fair feeding-ground, bunch and grama grass, and plenty of nice, dry wood. There had been a grove there, but a cyclone or hurricane had leveled nearly every tree, and to pass up the trail they would have to make quite a detour out on the plain.

* A half-day's journey.

It was early—the sun full two hours high. When Tombstone Dick rode back and gave orders to park the wagons, and put out stock, there was some grumbling among those who were in a hurry to get through.

"Why do we stop so early?" asked Mr. Conrad.

"We are in a better place than we may find further on. And in the open, where with sentinels well out, we cannot have our stock run off, nor be fired on from ambush!"

"Fired on? You have seen no signs of any enemy, I hope?" cried Magdalena.

"No, lady—no—but I feel strangely uneasy. It may be folly, but I think the angels of the Great Spirit sometimes whisper warnings in the air. This is a good place to camp—and I halt here, without Mr. Conrad positively orders me to go on and risk a poorer find when it will be too late to look for a better."

"I shall not interfere with your good judgment. You are my guide and I have trusted in your judgment so far and shall continue to do so."

That settled it, and the men went into camp without any further remonstrance. The animals out, fires made and good suppers cooked, put them in better humor yet.

The journey had that day been rather hard, the country rough and broken over which they traveled, and it looked as if it would be worse next day.

On the south a dry and barren range of lofty hills—ahead, dry and rocky ridges; far off, great mountains which seemed to lift their crests to the very clouds.

Dick still kept up his discipline, and now that there were plenty of men for guard duty he was not sparing in his number of sentinels.

The Tombstone men under Hines were a jolly set, and over the camp-fires told many a jovial story while they ate and drank, and later on smoked their pipes and enjoyed themselves until it was time for sleep.

They had been so long on the frontier that there was no hardship in a bed on the hard ground, with only a blanket between them and the starry sky—a saddle for their pillow, a rifle at their side, and knife and revolver in unslackened belt.

By midnight the camp was at rest, and early in the morning it was all life again. Coffee was made and meat cooked, for some venison had been shot the day before and had to be used while yet fresh and sweet.

At the first glimpse of dawn Tombstone Dick mounted his horse and rode off on a scout around the camp to see if there were any signs of an enemy in the vicinity.

At a spring a half-mile away, in which the small stream headed on which the camp had been made, he found something which caused him to dismount for a closer examination. It was the impress of a human foot in the narrow strip of sand, and it had been recently made.

Anxiously, closely, he looked at the mark.

"A moccasin. An Indian has been here to drink. Here were his knees and here his hands when he lay down to drink, having no cup to dip up the water. And lately—too. There is a small bush bent over—not yet straightened back."

These were his comments as he looked all around.

"Ah, there were two!" he continued. He found where another had drank from the stream where it flowed past a rock a few yards lower down.

"They were spies—they have been down to our camp and have headed back for the mountains. I was not wrong when I felt an impending evil hanging over us. We shall have the Apaches to battle with before we reach the mines."

He examined the few signs which the cautious red-skins had left, found the direction they had taken—then hurried back to camp.

He found the people at breakfast. He said nothing of his discovery, but took the cup of coffee his mother had ready for him and drank it in silence.

Then he asked Mr. Conrad to lend him the large marine glass which the former carried, a fine telescope with a very long range to a good eye.

Through it he scanned the distant mountains. Magdalena watched him and looked in the same direction. Suddenly, a bright flash on a far-away height, like the sun's reflection on a mirror, was seen.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

OUTWITTING THE FOE.

"WHAT was that? It could not be lightning without a cloud in sight?" cried Magdalena, in alarm.

"What did you see?" asked her father.

"A sudden gleam of light, like a flash of fire. Ah, there it is again," she cried.

"What does it mean, Mr. Hartman? You can see more plainly through the glass."

"It means that what I said last night was true. The angels of the Great Spirit whisper warnings to those they love. I felt last night that danger was lurking in our path. Even then, the spies of an enemy were most likely

counting our numbers; and now, a large body, I know not how many, are laying a course to intercept our trail."

"Ah—Indians?" asked Mr. Hines.

"Both whites and Indians, I think. They are very far off, and I can see but a little of them now and then as they wind down a mountain trail. Miss Magdalena saw a flash of light reflected from bright gun-barrels. That shows white men are in the party. An Indian has more sense, and would let a barrel go thick with rust, before it should be so bright as to gleam in the eyes of game or show his presence to an enemy."

"That villain has met renegade Indians, perhaps, and rallied his force to try to cut us off," said Mr. Conrad. "You are sure there are Indians in the party?"

"Yes; I saw the scarlet blanket of a chief. They are all out of sight, now. It was a streak of fortune which led me to a spring where two spies stopped to drink, for I might not have looked through the glass in time to get a glimpse of an enemy, but for that."

"What will you do?" asked Hines.

"Go on our journey, but I shall take another pass through the mountain. This trail leads through the notch which opens a little to the left of our front. The enemy is heading so as to reach that pass first and cut us off. He will be in it by noon. We could not get there much before night. He will hide and wait for us. But there is another pass, far to the right. He will wait for us in vain, for I change our direction and take the western notch, though it puts us full a day longer on the way."

"No matter, if we evade the enemy," said Mr. Conrad.

"I'd like to go right on and fight the cusses!" said Mart Wilder, who had remained with the Tombstone men. "The blood of my murdered comrades cries out for vengeance. I see poor Boyd in my dreams every time I go to sleep."

"Were it not for them," said Tombstone Dick, gravely, as he pointed to the females, "I would be as ready to fight as you. But we must take no risks we can avoid, until they are safe!"

"The guide is right. Now let us move as soon as we can!" said Hines.

In a brief period the column was in motion and on a new course, under cover of a long wooded ridge, striking off to a point in the high range before them, far to the right of the pass they had intended to camp in that night.

Dick then threw out flankers rather than usual, and kept the main body well together, though he felt no alarm about an attack that day. He was almost sure he had fathomed the plans of the enemy. By their spies they had learned his route and would try to ambush him in the narrow pass into which that trail led! They would get in its vicinity long before he could reach it from his last camp, and have ample time to hide their horses and get position before he could get up, had he taken that route.

He hurried his party on with all the speed they could get out of the animals. He wanted to get as far as he could and into good ground for defense, before the enemy should find they had been outwitted, and push on to cut him off on his new route or attack him in the rear.

He had a good military head, if he was but a half-breed.

There was but a brief nooning this day. A halt long enough to water in a stream as they rode over it, no feed for the horses, and the command eating a cold bite while on the march.

The consequence was that a march nearly a third longer than usual, in a day, placed them at dark in camp at the mouth of the other pass, with good grass and water for their animals.

Dick would allow no fires now, and they had to fall back on bread, dried meats and cold water for supper.

The horses and mules under a strong guard were allowed to feed till they were full, and then taken inside the pass and secured so that a stampede would be next to impossible, and strong guards posted.

Not a sign of an enemy had been seen since morning, and the fact that game was seen quite plentiful and not at all shy was proof that no Indians were in that section, yet.

Magdalena had been quite downhearted in the morning. A horror of their persistent persecutor, filled her soul. It seemed as if he never could be shaken off.

But so far ahead that day and no further sign from him—the assurance of their guide that he must be even then lurking in the recesses of the other pass, waiting in vain to strike a deadly blow, cheered her up, and after a long and pleasant talk with her father and Mr. Hines, she went to sleep, confident of present safety and full of hope for the future.

There was no alarm that night. Before daylight the animals were fed almost the last ration of grain, for two reasons. First, to lighten the wagon-loads, next, to strengthen the beasts for another forced day's journey. Breakfast was taken early, fire only made for coffee.

The instant it was light enough to see in the dark gorges before them, the route was taken up.

Tombstone Dick with half the mounted force

led the way. Hines with the rest, guarded the rear—the wagons in the center of the line.

In all the route, so far, they had come on no scenery so grand as that which now met their eyes. Great cliffs, bright with quartz rock, some red with cinnabar—high peaks crowned with dwarfed trees, rushing rills leaping in columns of spray from rocky ledges, on either hand—yawning caves, fit hiding-place for the spotted cougar or the dread cinnamon and grizzly bear, were seen as they passed along, winding about through the great canyon which pierced this lofty range.

All day only halting once for half an hour they moved on, passing the divide after climbing many a steep grade and near night going down steep declines, until just before dark, Dick called a halt.

"We are almost through!" he said. "We can camp here to good advantage and by morning will be likely to know whether our foes have given up the idea of a fight or not."

The camp was made in a pretty spot. Just grass enough in the little basin in the pass for the stock, plenty of good water and wood enough to cook supper by.

Some game had been killed by the advance guard, and all hands enjoyed a good meal after the fatigue of another long march.

Then a strong guard was posted, front and rear, and all not on duty sunk down to much-needed rest.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

BAFFLED.

RAYMOND was all impatience to move after he heard how near the Conrad train was to his party. He told Ignacia to urge Geronimo to start on at once.

"Why do you pursue those people with such hate?" she asked.

"You heard the runners speak of an old man—the owner of the outfit. He is the deadliest enemy I have in the world, robbed me of thousands upon thousands which now with Geronimo's help I will get back. Day is dawning, why do s he not start?"

"He says there is plenty of time before him. The people you are after will not reach the mountain-pass where he will lay in wait for them till nearly night—maybe not till dark. He can get there before noon—they are so far behind us."

Raymond said no more. The command all breakfasted and then mounting began the steep descent of the mountain. The Indians led the way. No white man would have dared to try it, had he not seen the passage was possible because the red-men on their ponies got over it.

Down pitches so steep it was almost impossible to keep the saddle, along the narrow verge of cliffs where depths so great all was darkness to the eye below, made the dizzy brain sick with apprehension—through tangled thickets where only the bear, the mountain lion and the spotted cougar had ever torn their way, they moved on toward a notch in the great range that reared its lofty peaks almost in front of them.

No runners were sent ahead to-day. The enemy they had been sent to locate had been found—his course of travel learned, all that was to be done now was to get ahead of him on his own trail.

Geronimo, stern and silent, rode at the head of his men until the sun was nearly overhead.

Then he halted, and Raymond, with Ignacia, rode up to his side.

The chief pointed down from a ridge they were on, to a little valley through which a silvery brook ran along, sparkling in the sunlight. "The people you seek, will come up that trail!"

He pointed down. Then he continued, while Ignacia translated his words:

"A little way further on we will leave our horses, with a guard, in thick feed behind this ridge. They will eat and drink, and lay down when full, and make no noise."

"On foot, keeping off the trail so as to leave no sign, we will take all but the horse-guard of a few men and get in their way inside the pass. They will camp, and when all are asleep we will creep in on their guard, kill them, and then every scalp in the party is our own!"

"Not all—it is not right to kill and scalp women!" said Raymond. "I would have them spared!"

"Why?" asked Ignacia, speaking for herself now, her dark eyes sparkling with jealous fire. "Have you ever known the women in that train?"

"Not the Indian woman the runners told the chief was there. But the white woman is the daughter of the old man who robbed me!"

"And you would have her spared? Is she pretty?"

"Not half so beautiful as you, Ignacia!"

The answer seemed to partly satisfy her.

"What will you do with her, when captured?"

"Make her your servant!" was his answer.

"She and the Indian woman shall wait on you, and you shall work no more!"

This finished the work so warily begun. Jealousy was dead in that throbbing bosom. I should not say dead, perhaps, but it was put to sleep for the time.

The place to leave the horses was soon reached. A small guard—four white men and two Indians—remained to watch them. Jones, yet too badly off from his wound to do any fighting, was left in charge.

Raymond insisted on Ignacia staying here also. But she would not. "I will not be in your way when we fight," she said. "I am used to the song of the flying arrow, the swish of the deadly lance, the ping of the bullet. I shall go where you go, risk all you risk, die if you fall!"

All Raymond could say would not change her will.

So now on foot, some Indians with Geronimo and Raymond in front, and other Indians closing up the rear, Raymond's men in the center, in single file, stepping in each other's tracks, and careful to leave no signs or make undue noise, the band moved on.

A stream, the same which ran down the valley and skirted the wagon-trail, ran out of the pass. It was a mountain brook, the water cold and clear, but every man had to follow the lead of Geronimo, who, up to his knees in the chilling water, led the way into the pass, thus showing not a single foot-mark on the road.

Indian cunning was here fully exemplified, and Indian fortitude exhibited. White men would have scorned such caution.

Into the gorge full half a mile, around a sharp bend, then, shivering, the party left the water.

Pointing to the loose rocks on either side of the road, Geronimo said with a grim smile:

"You are cold! Get warm with work! Build a thick, high wall, across the road. It will stop our enemies, if we do not find them asleep. And it will stop bullets if we have to fight!"

The white men went to work, the Indians looked on, and thus in a little while a strong barricade was thrown up.

Now scouts—Indians, went down the trail to look out for the advance of the expected train.

Raymond and his men looked to their arms closely and waited nervously, while Geronimo was asked to instruct his men how to act, to kill every man in the party that came up, but to be careful not to hurt a woman.

Hours passed—the men were hungry and tired of waiting. But no train came in sight. The scouts sent out went down the trail or in sight of it, several miles and saw no sign of men, horses or wagons.

And night came on finding them still vainly waiting—nothing to do.

Geronimo was angry. Raymond was wild with disappointment. The first runner sent out was called up and questioned closely. Was it possible they had been seen by those who controlled the train and given them an alarm the day before?

The Indians said no. They had been close under cover when they counted the numbers they reported. They were not in sight of them, at any time. When they left their concealment it was dark and no one could have seen them.

"Yet the train has stopped or taken another road!" said Raymond. "They may have had some accident and stayed in camp!"

It was decided to send swift runners to where the train was last sighted, to see what had become of it. In the mean time the band in the pass sent for provisions that had been left with the horses and went into camp in the pass.

All that night was spent there. A little after dawn, while the men were eating a scanty and ill-cooked meal the runners came in and reported that the train had taken another trail and gone west by another pass in the mountain. They had gained a great advantage and would most likely then be beyond the range and a day nearer to the mines than the party under Raymond and Geronimo.

The leaders were very sore at being thus baffled when they thought the game was in their own hands and almost finished. But it was promptly decided to tear a passage through their barricade, send for the horses and push forward. Neither wanted to give up the chase now.

And Geronimo, far-sighted, seeing that those they pursued might get through to the mines before they could cut them off, sent back a mounted courier to order up one hundred more warriors on his trail to help in the fight, if they had to tackle their enemies in the works at the mines.

He knew that then, only in great numbers, would there be an advantage. And he would only fight with advantage on his side.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE ONSET.

Two days of forced travel, exceeding by over one-third the usual journey for that time, told harshly on the draught animals of Mr. Conrad's train, and even those under saddle were weary since early starts and late camping at night gave them a poor chance to feed.

"We must ease down in our gait, or break down!" said Tombstone Dick talking with his employer and Mr. Hines, as they were ready to leave the mountain pass by which they had saved themselves. Our route to-day is over a very fair road, but we must not hurry. I have one spare horse and I think I will send on a man

with that horse to change to let them know we are coming, also if we should get into trouble before we reach the Magdalena, they may be able to help us, should we need assistance."

"You will do right. You are wise in thinking of it. One man less now, may be a gain of twenty or more when we need them most!" said Mr. Conrad.

So the messenger was selected and hurried on.

In the march this day Dick allowed no hunting, no straggling. A gun fired might serve as a note of guidance to their foes.

"I care little for that land of outlaws and Tombstone roughs!" said Dick, talking with Hines, who rode in advance with him, side by side. "They are only dangerous when wild with drink and I don't think they brought away enough poison to last them till now. But if they have got Apaches to side with them, the latter know the country and they are more fierce and cunning than the wild cougar of the hills. They are tireless on a trail, can go day and night in advance or retreat, tighten their belts and go hungry when white men would give out. They are dangerous!"

"I know it!" said Hines. "But they are not armed so well as we! Bows and arrows, lances and war-clubs are poor opponents to repeating rifles and good revolvers."

"I know it, sir. And there is where we may hold our own! They have some rifles!"

This day, at a good watering place—a shallow lake with good grass by its side, they held an hour's nooning and then pushed on.

They did not camp till near sunset, when they reached a spring at the foot of a small circular hill, just large enough for their own use and to water their stock. There was no dry wood near and only a small grove of green willows in the edge of which the wagons and ambulance were parked.

Dick requested the ladies to make coffee for all over their spirit lamps in the ambulance, for he would allow no fires, even had wood been plenty.

Many of the men grumbled, for they had an idea he was too cautious. No enemy had been seen that day—not a sign that any foe was near.

But Dick went on with his duty regardless of sneers and frowns.

The horses were fed for an hour, then brought in and besides being hopped, were picketed down close, between the grove and the hill. Sentinels were thrown out close, all around the camp and Dick sent a guard of six of his own trusty men to the top of the hill to remain there all night, to hold it as a vantage ground in case of attack, since it commanded the camp below and once occupied by an enemy would render the last untenable.

All this seemed like "fuss" to the tired men from Tombstone, and had it not been for the influence of Hines, they would have revolted and refused the guard duty assigned to them. He told them Dick was sure Apaches were on their trail, and only in vigilance could safety be secured.

After supper, and when all guards were posted, Dick went all the rounds and then came back to the ambulance where his mother and Magdalena were seated, while one of the men took out the wagon seats so that the mattresses could be laid down.

Mr. Conrad stood near and said:

"You seem to act with unusual care to-night, Hartman."

"It is needed, sir. If the Apaches, who I am almost sure are with your white enemies, exercise their usual tactics, we may be attacked between midnight and the dawn of day. Fairly on our guard, we will surprise them instead of their surprising us when they attack, and beat them off at a loss which will make them let us alone hereafter. If we are attacked, rise at once and put up the mattresses as I have shown you how to do, and on no account leave the ambulance. Sleep with your clothes all on, and your arms ready for use at your side."

These instructions given, Dick went to examine the horses and to see none were loose. A stampede of their animals meant death and ruin to the whole party.

Dick, after that, went along the line of outer sentinels to see that there each man was alert. Along toward midnight, he heard the neigh of a horse to the eastward. He knew then that others than his party were near.

Soon after, the cry of a coyote away on the left was answered by one almost in front of him and not very far away.

"Keep your eyes open, now," he said to his sentinels. "The coyotes you hear travel on two legs!"

Hurrying back, he aroused Hines, and much against their will, every man in the party was roused from sleep and stood to arms.

The half-breed was scared, they said, and wanted to wear them out to show himself off as a big leader.

An hour they stood in silence, impatient and angry.

Then, sudden as a flash of lightning from a single cloud, there came a wild shriek and a shot a second after.

"Forward, in line, and cover camp!" cried

Dick, just as a series of horrible yells and hoarse shouts were heard near where the shot was fired.

The sentinels all rallied to the center—all but one, and his death-shriek had reached their ears. In the dim starlight, a dense mass of mounted men was seen dashing toward the line.

"Open fire—keep it up, steady!" cried Dick, suiting his action to his words.

A sheet of flame burst out from the line and the men now blessed the fortune which gave them a leader who knew what he was about.

Bullets and arrows came whizzing and hurtling through the air and the mass in front seemed to come on unchecked, their terrible yells and shouts louder, wilder than ever.

But in a steady roll of flame the Winchesters from the trainmen did their work, the mass in front wavered, then their onset stopped and the yells grew fainter as they began to scatter off and fall back.

"Repulsed!" said Dick—"REPULSED—but stand to arms, men, for they're game and may try it again!"

Hines heard his voice tremble.

"You're hit, Dick—is it bad?"

"No—no, look to others! There's more hurt than me! I've got a scratch, but I'll soon fix it!"

And he tore his scarf off and bound it tightly about his leg, just above the knee.

"It is a flesh-wound, no bones broken—ah, there they go on the hill! They'll catch it there!"

A rattling volley followed by a steady rolling fire from the gallant guard stationed by his forethought on the most important ground of all, told that the enemy had sought in vain to occupy that point.

Hurrying several wounded men for surgical care to a place of safety, near the ambulance, where Mrs. Hartman aided by Magdalena and her father did good service in bandaging wounds and checking hemorrhage, Dick now took a half-dozen men and brought in the dead sentinel whose scalp had been taken and whose gun had been carried off. A lance had been thrust through and through his body by the Indian who had crept upon him.

Beyond lay the bodies of several of the enemy. Dick did not investigate them, he had enough to do to take care of his own.

The firing had ceased on the hill, and by the yells of surprised and repulsed Indians, Dick knew that his men still held their post of advantage. But he resolved to strengthen it with more men, since the enemy had shown they knew its importance by attacking the party stationed there.

It was likely they did not think it occupied, for from the sounds Dick thought only a small party of Indians had gone up.

His wisdom in reinforcing the point was soon seen. A body of mounted Indians charged furiously up the hill thinking they could ride over all opposition.

But a withering fire met them half-way and they were scattered and driven back with loss before they could get even within pistol-shot of the white men.

"Beaten at every point—they'll let us alone till day dawns!" said Dick. "Then we will soon know what to expect!"

Under cover of darkness he now sent food and several jugs of water to the men on the hill and advised his men in squads, while the rest stood to arms, to refresh themselves while they had time.

Looking over his casualties, he found seven men wounded, one he feared fatally—not counting his own painful hurt, a ball through the thick flesh outside of the thigh, six or eight inches above the knee.

Had it been inside, the femoral artery in the way, it would have been good-by Dick.

One man—the sentinel, was killed. But his death-shriek had given the alarm and put them on the alert, and their united volley had laid out a good many foes and checked a charge, which would have been overwhelming, had the enemy only been able to close in.

From now till daylight—only a brief hour, the time was passed in securing the horses and mules behind the wagons and out of bullet range, in strengthening the position by putting the wagons in line and putting the men on the hill, whose guns had the longest range. There were some twenty of "Sharpe's Old Reliable," good for a thousand yards any shot, and these were placed where they could be used from the point which commanded the greatest range of country.

Hines took command of these, and Dick held the post below.

When welcome light appeared, Dick, with Mr. Conrad's glass, scanned the appearance of the enemy.

In a mass, the Indians mounted, the white men afoot, they seemed to be preparing for another charge.

Of the white men, Raymond conspicuous as the tallest of the lot, sat on a horse and seemed by his excited gestures, to be urging his men into a battle for which they had no relish.

The Indians, painted and stripped for fight, headed by their savage chief—all of them with lances, some with rifles, others with bows at

their backs, seemed on their fiery ponies only to wait for the better-armed white men to move on and charge, to make one of their accustomed fiery dashes. Ever and anon, one yelled wildly. It was a cry for vengeance. Several of their race lay dead before the camp, others up on the hillside.

All at once, with rifles at a shoulder, scattered as in skirmish line, the band under Raymond moved slowly forward. Their leader, on his horse held the center of the line. They were beyond Winchester range from the camp, but a sudden puff of smoke from a single rifle on the hill was seen, and in a second the horse which Raymond rode, was seen to rear up and fall over backward with his rider under when it struck the ground.

Hines had the range—one of his marksmen made the shot. While the outlaws hurried to drag their leader from under his slain horse, a half-dozen more bullets flew in among them and they fell back, Raymond limping along aided by one of his men, while two lay still on the earth where they fell.

The distance was over a thousand yards, and the white men, demoralized by such deadly work at such a range, got away behind a ridge over which they had advanced.

The Indians, as if ashamed of such cowardice, now began to run their horses in swift half-circles before the camp, never still a second, while yelling fearfully they shook their lances and sought to terrify their now passive foes.

Hines, though he might with his men have made one shot in a dozen tell, even in that flying horde, now held his fire. He had no desire to waste any ammunition.

Suddenly the Indians, numbering about forty braves, wheeled in one of their circles, and then heading straight for the wagons, made a wild swoop right down upon them in one dense mass.

Tombstone Dick was ready for this new danger. All his men were behind his wagon barricade, expecting it, and waiting for the red horde within Winchester range.

Hines, too, saw the peril of his comrades, and poured a whole volley into the seething rush, and several warriors fell out, or rather fell down in the mad advance.

But when within Winchester range the fun opened, and Geronimo, his own war-pony hit, saw fully one-third of his warriors go down, or turn short away, to get clear of the hail of bullets which came in continuous showers among them.

The rest, as soon as they could wheel in their onward career, circled, and were off as fast as they could go—heading anywhere that led from under that murderous fire.

In a minute only such horses and warriors as lay crippled or dead on the ground were under fire. Ten seconds later, not one who could get out of it was in sight.

On the hill, Hines and his men gave three rousing cheers. They were echoed by the men in the camp below. It was a skillful and a noble defense.

The enemy, both Indians and whites, had not only been twice driven back from assault, but they had been badly punished, while of the trainmen in this last *melee*, not one had been hurt.

"It seems incredible. Surely our Father above is helping us!" said Magdalena, whose rifle, as well as that of Mrs. Hartman, had helped to swell the last shower of lead donated to the red-men.

Long and anxiously did they wait to see if another attack would be made.

It was not attempted. From his post on the hill Hines could see the Indians and outlaws. They evidently did not appear to intend retreating any further, even if they made no more attacks.

Hines sent down word to Mr. Conrad and Dick that he believed they expected reinforcements. They had their horses out to grass under guard, they were digging for water where they had halted, and water could be found at a shallow depth almost anywhere in those valleys.

"If that is the case, we must dare a good deal, and try to disappoint them," said Dick.

"What is your plan—to attack them?" asked Mr. Conrad.

"No, sir; that would be madness, indeed! They have, with all their losses, too many men for us to meet in open battle," was his answer. "I have a plan, but the only hope to succeed with it will be to keep it so secret that not an inkling of it can reach our enemies until it is carried out."

"The first step is to feed our animals and to refresh them with water!"

Details of men now cut grass and carried water to the mules and horses, which could not be unloosed to feed without danger of being frightened into a stampede.

A few mounted riflemen were sent out to keep guard toward the position of the enemy. And they were instructed to let their horses feed while they watched. And Dick silent and passive waited for nightfall.

He went on the hill and had a long conference with Hines. When he came back he brought a line to Mr. Conrad. It said:

"Trust in Dick, he will save us yet!"

CHAPTER XL.

NEW TACTICS.

WHEN Geronimo rode back on his favorite pony, the latter wounded and limping, many of his warriors hit and half a score left dead behind as well as many ponies, his anger was terrible.

"Tell the pale-faced coward," he cried to Ignacia, "what I say!"

And he pointed to Raymond, who was bathing his bruised and nearly broken limbs.

"My husband is no coward!" said Ignacia with flashing eyes. "He was in front of his men, leading them to battle like a man, when his horse was shot and fell on him and almost crushed him. He is no coward, nor am I, for I will lead in his place when you are ready to charge again!"

Geronimo smiled grimly.

"You are right!" he said. "A woman should lead such men! They hid here behind the sand-hill while I charged alone. I have lost many warriors. They, only four or five. I am sick of boy's play. I will go back among my own people!"

"Do—after taking money from my husband to fight for him! That is honor in an Apache Chief!"

"Why does not your husband talk for himself?"

"Because he does not know what you say? I would not repeat your cruel words to his ear. I will not call him a coward from your mouth, for it is not true!"

"Ignacia is a brave woman. Geronimo takes back his hot words. His heart is sore because he has had to turn his back upon an enemy. Ask your husband, what he means to do now?"

Ignacia did so.

Raymond answered the question thus:

"Let Geronimo speak. He is brave and wise. My ears are open to his advice. We found our enemies awake when we thought they were asleep. We found they had more men and better arms than we expected. They had better ground than we and fought for their lives. But while we are here they cannot go on. Neither can they put their horses out to feed for we will run them off if they do. Let the great chief speak—I will listen!"

Ignacia faithfully translated word for word.

The Apache listened and lighted his pipe while he did so.

A talk without a smoke don't amount to shucks with an Indian.

He smoked and when he was ready to answer handed his pipe over for Raymond to take a draw of consolation.

"Geronimo has heard the words of his white brother. It makes his heart sick to see so many men go down on one side. We have only one scalp to comfort us. Our enemies have the best guns. They can shoot a man as far as they can see him. We have no chance in the light—while the sun shines. They can shoot all the time with guns that never get tired of going off. They can throw bullets thicker than hail falls in the storm. We must wait. In two suns at most, a hundred more warriors will stand at my back."

"We will wait, if it is the will of Geronimo, for them. But I had another plan, and if Geronimo accepts I will lead, even if I fall in making the trial."

Ignacia repeated the words of Raymond.

"Geronimo will hear the plan of his white brother."

And the chief reached out his hand for his pipe.

Raymond went on:

"Back a little way on our trail is a great pine that has fallen and lays dead upon the ground, full of pitch!"

Geronimo bowed his head in token that he had seen it.

"We will send back men with hatchets, who will cut bundles of splinters which will burn almost as quick as powder. The men we fight have put out sentinels. They stand almost a rifle-shot apart. Their men are few, and they can spare but a small guard to watch!"

Again Geronimo bowed, and his dark face wore a brighter look. He was getting "on" Raymond's plan.

"After dark, we will light camp-fires. Your warriors will dance the scalp-dance, and make great noise."

"When it is late, and very dark—for there will be no moon then—a few men, of whom I will be one, will crawl in between their sentinels and creep over the ground like snakes, silent and careful. Each will carry a bundle of dry pine splinters. We will put them under the wagons if we can, and setting fire to them, escape in the darkness."

"Then you and your warriors and all my men will rush firing toward them, and when their wagons burn, their barricade is gone, and most likely all their stock will break loose in fright, and run."

"Then—then there is no escape for them, and if we cannot defeat them in the panic, we can fall back and wait for the coming warriors of Geronimo!"

After Ignacia had finished, and Geronimo understood the plan, he smoked thoughtfully

for several minutes, while he pondered over all the chances.

"My brother is wise; the plan is good. If the men at the wagons cannot see or hear until the fire is alight, they will never see any other light again. We will close in and kill them by the blaze of their own wagons."

For the next hour men, Indians and whites, were busy behind their sand-ridge cover, making ready for what Raymond believed would be a holocaust!

Raymond, who had been attended by Ignacia, and his bruised limbs bathed with strong liquor in his anxiety to have everything right, saw to the putting up of light bundles of inflammable fagots; and three white men and three Indians were selected to do the work that night. But he insisted on leading them himself.

He saw with delight that the mounted men had all been called in from in front of Conrad's camp and foot-guards posted about a hundred yards apart. That suited him. His men surely, in single file, might creep unheard between those sentinels in a dark night while the noise of the infernal scalp-dance filled the air so near at hand.

He could hardly eat or drink when the rest ate before dark, so full was he of thoughts of the work before him. He had got his black heart so excited with an ambition to conquer where he had been so often foiled, that he could think of nothing else. He even forgot to speak kindly to the fond woman who had done so much for him.

Night fell at last. It came on dark, windy and cloudy. Just the kind of night to suit the plan which Raymond had formed.

It was hard for him to control his eagerness and wait a proper hour for action. It was best, Geronimo said, to wait until the sentinels would get sleepy and careless, the men in camp turn in to rest.

So he waited, counting the minutes as they passed.

About an hour before midnight the Indians, with a great fire ablaze, began their war and scalp-dance.

Then out into the darkness, with no weapons but knife and pistol in the way, each man but Raymond bearing the fat pine torch-wood, three Indians and three white men crept.

After a long time, it seemed to the leader, they came to the line of sentinels. As they crouched low on the sand, grim and erect, silent and motionless, they saw a sentinel on either hand. They appeared to be hearkening to the infernal din made around the scalp-pole in the Indian camp.

Safely Raymond's party passed on unseen—unheard. They now went on breathlessly. If seen or heard before they got to the wagons, they knew a deadly volley would greet them from in front. Raymond in the lead had to pause from time to time—his heart beat like a kettle-drum. He could hear every rapid throb.

But now, dark below and white where the canvas covers rose, the wagons were close before them.

On—so still, hardly breathing they went. A minute more and they were under the wagons, the torch-wood in its place. Not a sound of man or beast could be heard. Raymond began to be scared. If any one was there, he must hear some sign of life, he thought. What could this mysterious silence mean?

CHAPTER XLI.

"LEFT."

In a whisper, Raymond said "Wait," after all the bundles of torch-wood in a single heap were ready for ignition. The ambulance was near, he crept up close and listened. Not a sound of life within.

He examined it closer, then the wagons and even crept inside the line where he supposed the camp was.

"Ten thousand curses! the wagons are deserted. There is some trick," he whispered, as he rejoined his men.

"Fire the wagons, boss, and we'll soon find out while we're getting back," said the man he spoke to.

"Be ready for a run, then," was his answer. "Go!" and drawing a match over the sole of his boot, he had it and the wood alight in a second.

Then he crept off in the rear of his men, expecting each second to be fired on from behind.

As he hurried into the darkness a blaze rose behind him, and in less than half a minute the wood had set the dry wagons all ablaze.

Yet not a shot, not the neigh of a frightened horse, not a single shout was heard. Nor did one man in that line of posted sentinels stir.

The blazing wagons made the hill and campground of the train-men light as day. Not a man, woman or horse was visible.

Raymond, in desperation, rushed toward the nearest sentinel. He stood face to face with a dead man, one of his own party, killed in the first onset.

And he was supported upright by being tied to an Indian lance thrust into the ground.

Of these dead, red and white, all that line of sentinels was composed. No wonder they did not hear or hail those who passed—no won-

der now, that Raymond and his daring party were not fired on.

The plan of Tombstone Dick had been a success, and his whole party, mounted, and going "flying-light," were many a mile on the route to the Magdalena mine, before their absence was discovered.

The wagons with all the stores that could not be carried away were in a lurid blaze of fire before Raymond understood the situation.

While the flames shot high in the air, Geronimo, with his warriors and the rest of the outlaw band came rushing on, and Raymond and his companions were in most danger from them as they rushed wildly forward.

But the lack of resistance, the utter silence in front, the tenantless hilltop soon told the story, and in his bitterness, Geronimo cried out:

"We are all fools. Only our enemies are wise!"

Ignacia laughed when she repeated the words. It was the first time she had ever heard him say an enemy could be wiser than he.

Now, all in a body, they went into the deserted camp. The blazing wagons showed it was empty, but the hoof-marks, the willows all torn down about the spring, everything showed how slyly and quietly the entire command had got away.

To trail them before dawn was next to impossible, though Raymond wanted to follow them up the moment the moon rose.

Geronimo, disgusted with their past continued failures, would not go on before dawn, so that ended the matter.

Raymond chewed the bitter cud of disappointment and did not relish it. His man, Jones, who was not yet in fighting trim, but who since Parkerton's death, had acted as his lieutenant, was particularly put out.

"Boss—if I was you, I'd cry quits, and drop the game. You're sure to be beat, every trick. As the psalm-singers say, the Lord don't seem to be on your side. And, if he isn't, He'll be sure to help the other side!"

"I'll trust to Satan then! He is best acquainted with our crowd any way!" said Raymond angrily.

"Just as you like, boss. I know I'm an everlasting sinner and don't expect much from above but I'd rather take my chances on the best side if I had my way. I'll do all I can to keep the men in a good humor, but they're getting waspish on short rations, hard fightin' and nary drop o' red-eye left!"

"It is hard! I'll give 'em something hot to take before long. We follow that train if it is to death to-morrow morning. I'd go on to-night, but the chief hangs back for daylight!"

"The more sense in him. We'll not be walkin' into some trap in the dark. Tombstone Dick is ahead and neck ahead of us in the race!"

"Do you think this is all his work?"

"I don't think anything about it. I know it. I've told you before he was the smartest cuss in Tombstone. He never would have walked into our soft snap as Bill Boyd did. He has eyes for everything. When Geronimo sent out them runners, I felt just as if Dick would smell 'em if he didn't see 'em. Keen is no name for his smartness. He is double-edged on a fine bone. But I'm in for a nap. I want sleep if we're in for a houndin' race in the morning!"

Raymond alone with Ignacia who carried his blanket also dropped down on the ground near the embers of the burned wagons to sleep if he could.

CHAPTER XLII.

PURSUIT.

It was not until dark that any in Mr. Conrad's train except Mr. Hines on the hill had any idea of the plan by which Tombstone Dick hoped to save them and move them out from their dangerous position.

Then taking a half-dozen stout men along, he relieved the guard in front. We know how. Dead men were placed on the posts vacated by the living.

In silence the men now concealed in the gloom of night came down from the post of the hill. Horses and mules were saddled without noise and the two women placed on gentle but strong and serviceable animals. All stores except ammunition and provisions enough for two days' use were left. Nothing was taken that would impede progress, everything prepared for a swift and a silent march. And within half an hour from the first movement the long train, in close column was on its silent way—everything done so quietly, the movers were themselves astonished.

Dick, knowing the route had to lead the way. Mr. Hines with picked men formed a rear guard. The two females rode well in front, with Mr. Conrad.

Magdalena was delighted with the change. She did not regard the loss of the jolting ambulance at all. And now they were so near the mines, if by this stolen march they could get safely there, what was the loss of the wagons and a few stoves?

She thought and said she believed Dick to be one of the bravest, best men on earth. He heard her words and his heart throbbed with a new

and a proud joy. He almost forgot he had a painful wound which at any other time would have laid him up, for he suffered much in the heated inflammation which followed the passage of the bullet through the torn flesh, with no dressing but the scarf and the clotted blood which had not been even washed away.

Next to the females came the wounded men, each supported and aided to sit his horse by a well comrade, who from time to time passed a canteen to his lips containing diluted spirits, to keep him up.

All the night long it was thus. About midnight, or perhaps a little before, the light made by the burning wagons was seen. But no regret was expressed—only this, that the enemy had so soon discovered their departure.

"They have taken the stores and burned the wagons," said Dick, "and the whisky we left will most likely occupy them enough to keep them back a few hours."

Little did he think the wagons were fired before the stores were thought of, and that the whisky had gone up in flames, instead of down the throats of the enemy.

There was not much of it, to be sure, only some brought along for medical use, but it would have served his idea if it had been swallowed by those who he thought would be on the lookout for it. For he had doctored it with a quantity of morphine from Mr. Conrad's medical stores.

By the dawn the column had made fully thirty miles since it left the deserted camp.

It was necessary, for the sake of the animals, and for the wounded men, to rest and feed. An hour was spent in a grassy valley, where good water was abundant. They were nearing the hills where the mines were situated, and a few miles further would be on ground where they could take cover and avoid the dangers of a change which could be made in open ground.

The hour of rest refreshed everybody—especially the animals—and the march was renewed with vigor. The wounded men, though suffering, bore up, sustained by hope of future safety in a place where their wants could be cared for. One only, who knew he must die, with one ball through his lungs and another that pierced his abdomen, suffered terribly. He prayed his comrades to shoot him, end his sufferings, and leave him behind. Poor fellow, he had been one of their bravest, truest men—they could not leave him. So, supported by two men, one on either side, he was held on the easiest horse they had, and carried on.

By noon the hills were reached, not a half-day's march from the mines, if they had been fresh and strong, and not impeded by helpless men. Now the train wound along a road that could be defended easily. And, joy—almost inexpressible joy—from the "Magdalena," brought by the courier Dick had sent on, there came thirty well-armed men riding every horse and mule that could be had at the mines.

With this reinforcement, Dick had no fear of the force from which they had escaped. On good, defensible ground he could make a stand and drive them back, or destroy them.

He now halted long enough to have all the wounded looked to carefully and even permitted his own wound to be dressed.

Poor Burtis, the worst off of all, was dying. While the halt lasted, he died, and they buried him in a ravine off the road where no lurking Indian would find and dig him up to get his scalp.

Now Dick picked out a select body of men, small but strong and sent on the wounded with Mr. Conrad and the ladies to the mine, while he covered the rear with his main body, ready to punish the enemy if they persisted in following up.

It required a great deal of persuasion to get Mr. Conrad and his daughter to consent to go on, but the joint representations of Mr. Hines and of Dick also, finally conquered and they went along, Mrs. Hartman also, to care for the wounded.

It was supposed they would reach the mine by midnight, or thereabout, and the main party if not held back by an attack, would not be far behind them.

These repeated halts made the progress slow from morning on, as compared to the speed of the first few hours and gave their pursuers an advantage, for no matter how cool Chief Geronimo at first seemed, about the escape, when pursuit really commenced he led it with a fire and fury truly Apache.

Thus, when night was near at hand, his advance was seen by Tombstone Dick who had taken command of the rear-guard, when he sent the wounded forward.

"Now, we'll fight them!" he cried exultingly. "We have the men and the position and can hold off and beat back twice their number!"

He chose a splendid spot for a stand. It was in a narrow pass—or just at the mouth of it, apparently impassable cliffs on either hand, so they could not be flanked. He sent his horses on to be secured in his rear, preferring to fight on foot so his men could take cover easy. The road over which the enemy must come was wide and open, encouraging them to make a charge, but Hines and Dick were ready for that. They

not only threw up a light barricade to be used as a breastwork, but cut quite a pile of loose chaparral brush and threw it on the road just where the pass narrowed to tangle up and throw down horses on the run.

Scarcely were they ready when the Indians and outlaws who had halted to breathe and water their horses, to tighten girths and look to their arms, were seen massing up for a charge.

The tall form of Raymond sitting his horse in front, beside Geronimo, was conspicuous.

"Ready, men—we will wait till they are within a hundred yards and then we will sweep the road with our guns. Keep cool and fire low and they are our game!" cried Dick.

A second later and yelling and sending in arrows and bullets as they came, the enemy charged at topmost speed.

Well it was the barricade and brush was in the way for despite a volley which sent full half a score reeling out of their saddles, the Indians headmost in the race were in the brush before the withering fire from repeating rifles even checked their headway.

But for this obstacle, the fight would have now been to hand, but Hines and Dick backed by steady willing men, sent in such a shower of lead that no courage could face it. All that could get away did so, in the gathering gloom of night.

"Raymond is down, thank Heaven—here is the horse he rode!" cried Hines, grasping the bridle of a noble gray on which the villain had been seen, just before the charge. "The saddle and saddle-bags are wet—I hope with his life-blood."

"Secure the saddle-bags!" said Dick, "and send the horse to our rear. In the bags Mr. Conrad may find a part of the money the wretch stole from him!"

They waited now to receive a renewal of the attack. For they could hear furious yells from the Apaches in front, hoarse shouts and angry curses from white men and they did not believe one repulse would be accepted by them as defeat.

The men under Dick and Mr. Hines had been very fortunate. Only two were slightly wounded.

It was now pitch dark. Even the stars in a sky flecked with clouds gave scarce any light. Yet not for an instant did Dick relax his vigilance.

The barricade was strengthened. And over it lay a line of deadly tubes with good men behind them, ready to open fire on hearing a sound that showed an enemy near. It was decided to hold the post till day dawned, and longer too, if it was necessary.

No one slept. The enemy evidently meant to get in more work. The yells of the warriors rung shrill on the night winds.

And at the very moment when the trainmen were so busy strengthening their post, Raymond was wildly urging another advance. Struck in the side, bleeding badly he fell from his plunging horse and it had gone on and left him. As it did not come back with the rest, he feared it was in the hands of his enemies. And in his saddle-bags, lashed fast to the saddle there was not only twenty thousand dollars in money—greenbacks and gold and silver notes, but worst of all the papers he had taken from the grip-sack of the murdered Englishman, Clarence Wilson.

His wound, though it bled freely, did not disable him and when the blood was stanching he was wild in his desire to renew the battle. He must recover those papers before Mr. Conrad saw them or every plan of his was overturned.

CHAPTER XLIII.

A DREAM.

"MANOLO—I cannot bear this suspense any longer. I feel as if I shall go mad!"

It was Calamity Jane in Tombstone, who uttered these words. She had called the young Mexican over to her private parlor to talk to him.

"Half of the men who went on to bury Marshal Boyd and his men," she continued, "have returned! They report Raymond's party all scattered over the plains, fugitives, flying without stores or food which they will not dare to hunt for in the lands of the wild Apaches with whom they have already had a battle!"

"I have heard the story, senora!"

"And you believe it, do you not?"

"It sounds like truth, senora, because all of them tell it alike. No one contradicts another. Tombstone Dick followed a long distance on their trail with only half a dozen men. Had they not been terrorized, Mr. Raymond's men would have cut him off!"

"That is so. And I am almost wild. I dreamed of poor Raymond last night. In my vision I saw him alone, wounded and dying in the desert. His men had deserted him. His horse lay dead on the ground. Pale—not even a tree above his aching head, he sat by his useless rifle on the burning sand, weeping. He called my name, and I woke! Oh, it was so horrible!"

"Yet—only a dream, senora."

"I cannot help it. It seemed so real, I am all unnerved. I think I will go and try to find him. You can guide me."

"Senora, do not think of it. You never could endure the journey. On the hot and sandy plains, often without water for a day or more, no food but what you carry, for where there is game and water the peril of death lurks behind every bush, you would sink down and die. I am strong and used to hardship. I can see a trail where your eyes would discover no trace. I can stand hunger and thirst because I learned it in my youth. I will go—if he lives, I will find him, be his guide, and bring him back if you desire."

"He may now be a captive in some Apache camp."

"If he is, I will rescue him. I speak their tongue. I can put on their paint, go as they go, and no one will detect me."

"Brave, good Manolo! Will you go?"

"If you will that I should, senora."

"How many men shall I send with you?"

"Not one, senora. On a led horse I will take some wine, food, and medicine, in case they are needed. Alone, I can go unseen and in safety. If met, I can say I go to rejoin my people, and no one will stop me. If I had an escort, it would be known I went out for no good. I would be watched and followed."

"You are right, but it is a fearful mission to undertake alone. You are to ride right into the Apache land. You will be exposed night and day. Poor Manolo—I hate to send you, but I am wild in my desire to help him if he can be helped. There is some strange sympathy which draws my soul toward him. I know not what it is. I only know it is not love, for the only love I ever knew sleeps deep in a blood-stained grave. If you will go—wicked as I am, I will pray night and day for your success and safe return."

"And I will come back, senora. If my mother lives, I will hear from her—perhaps see her. If she is dead, I will say a prayer over her grave, and I will find your friend."

"Heaven grant it. Here is money. Buy the best horses you can find. Arms you have. I will provide stores and medicines. You find means to carry them."

"I will, senora."

"How soon can you start?"

"As soon as the streets are quiet—to-night, after you close; then I will be many miles away before any one is up and around to see me go."

"You are right, it is the best time. I shall feel more contented now, my brave, true friend. Go, and spare no pains in getting a good outfit."

Manolo bowed and left the room. He knew where to purchase horses from a Mexican ranchero who always kept a close tongue in his head, for he hated the American, and was jealous of their trade.

Next, was a fresh stock of the best ammunition. He knew his life might depend on that. His rifle, two revolvers, and a long sharp knife must protect his body, and in case of need, feed it also.

A poncho to shelter him at night, a rubber blanket to sleep on—these were luxuries. Flint, steel and tinder-box, dry shucks and tobacco for his cigarettes—these were his comforts.

The necessities he knew would be looked out for when Calamity Jane packed his stores.

When the young Mexican returned to the parlor of Calamity Jane, though but an hour had passed, he said he was ready.

Two good native mustangs that could live on grass, or go long without it—sturdy, strong and tireless; one easy saddle and a pack saddle for the stores, lariats, extra cinches and straps for the packs—nothing had been forgotten. They were in her private stable now.

"Then lay down here and rest. You will sup with me and start when it is time," she said.

He bowed his head in silent obedience. He seldom wasted words. And resting now, he could go far before he would need sleep again—as far as his horses could go without rest.

CHAPTER XLIV.

AN EXPLOSION.

In vain Raymond urged Geronimo to join him in a second charge on the barricade where Hines and Tombstone waited to welcome him "with bloody hands to a hospitable grave." The old chief said he had got enough fight for one night. He was tired, and would wait for his expected warriors to come up.

"But my horse, with over twenty thousand dollars in the saddle-bags, and papers worth millions to me, has gone, and the enemy must hold him."

"We will take it all by and by—now, my men shall wait. If you and your men are tired of life, go on!"

"Which we are not yet," said Jones, and he spoke for all who heard him.

Raymond chafed and fretted in vain. Geronimo and his band fell back out of range, and behind a jutting cliff dressed the wounds of all who had crept back from that terrific volley. Several white men claimed his aid; for Indian surgery, though rough, is effectual. Even Raymond, when he could do no better, allowed some balmy herbs to be pounded up and placed over his wound.

And thus the night passed, both parties almost face to face—one not daring to retreat, the other unwilling to advance.

At daybreak coffee was made for the men intrenched in the pass. It was a grateful refreshment, for not a man of them all had closed his eyes in sleep.

While eating a bite of cold meat, Hines opened the saddle-bags he had captured. When he saw that a large sum of money was packed there, he told only Dick of the fact. And when he saw and read the papers, the mystery of the murdered Englishman was solved. And the reason, too, why Raymond, alias Mortimer, was so anxious to secure the hand of Magdalena Conrad and capture or kill her father.

He was heir to an estate of millions, ready to be entered on at once. He *dead*—Magdalena could hold it all. And he who held Magdalena would thus be a millionaire.

To be sure that Mr. Conrad should at once receive this news, Mr. Hines selected two of his best men, and putting one on Raymond's captured horse and the other on his own, sent them on to the mines, with orders to deliver the saddle-bags as they were to Mr. Conrad, and to report the train safe, and in a good position to repel the enemy. If not attacked during the day, he and Tombstone Dick would move on for the mine as soon as night set in, believing they could travel most safely then.

Meantime, if an Indian or outlaw showed his head within range, he would be shot on sight.

And his best marksmen were posted where this design should be fulfilled. But the enemy was too wise to go into the target trade. They did, by their smokes, show they had camped down, and were cooking, but they did not give the sharpshooters a fair shot all day. Once or twice there was a glimpse seen, as if they were trying to inspect the position, nothing more.

Before night Mr. Hines received a message from Mr. Conrad. He had reached the mine in safety, found a warm welcome there, and all things ready to receive him. He at once had gone to putting his buildings in shape for defense, if any attack should be made there, and hoped the column would at once come in. He would spare them seven or eight more men, if they were needed.

"We will try to pull through to him after dark," was the answer sent by the messenger. "We have as many men as we can handle on the narrow road—more than the enemy have got, and better, too!"

It was nearly sundown.

"Them red reptiles are havin' some fun. Hear 'em screech," said Mart Wilder, as he stood near the barricade.

"And the white rascals, too," said Hines, as a hoarse "hurrah" came from a score of throats down the road.

Tombstone Dick looked anxious. There was more in that sudden hilarity to him than his companions understood. He had all the time feared the enemy would be reinforced. And now he was almost sure more men had joined them. Else they would not act so jubilant.

And—if this reinforcement was large, they might risk loss and pour in on him in overwhelming force. Or worse yet, try to outflank and surround him. He was sorry he had waited so long.

He might have fallen back, fighting perhaps, but all the time slowly and surely nearing his destination.

He thought he would start at once, with yet an hour of daylight to go in, and giving his reasons to Hines, proposed it. The latter demurred.

"They cannot crowd us here—we could hold off a thousand of 'em in our position," said the miner.

"Yes—but hunger will reach us if we stay. Our horses are under short feed where they are. We can't stay here long, no matter what turns up!"

"You are right," said Hines. "It shall be as you decide!"

"Then be ready with the horses. With ten of the best mounted men, I'll stay here and hold the barricade as long as I can. You go right on and when I have to fall back too, I will go on the gallop!" said Dick.

"Let me stay and you lead the main body!" said Hines.

"No—my post is here!" was the answer of the dauntless half-breed.

Hines knew it was useless to stay to argue that point and he hurried on.

It was time. He got glimpses of Indians who seemed to have scaled the cliffs and were aiming to flank them, or get beyond the party.

Meantime, Tombstone Dick was busy with another little game of his. There was an extra keg of powder and he hurriedly put it under the stone barricade in a nook just big enough to hold it. He inserted a short fuse and had it all ready for use when he saw in the gathering twilight an evidence that the enemy surely meant to make a charge.

Mounting all his men, with rifles ready and one holding his own horse, he stood by the fuse with a match in his hand. He calculated that in one minute from their start, despite

the volley he meant to fire before he galloped off, they would be at the barricade *en masse*.

He saw the feathers and the war-paint, the lances, the prancing ponies ready for the jump. "They come! Fire—one shot apiece and turn!" he said as he fired the fuse, then sprung to horse.

With fiendish yells a horde so dense it darkened the road was seen springing forward, unchecked by the fire of only ten shots.

Away—away like the wind, flew Dick and his men, the wild yells ringing in their ears. But soon, ere they were six hundred yards away, the very earth shook under them and a deafening boom in their rear told that Dick's last little trick had worked.

The yells of pursuit were no longer heard—even a few Indians seen on the cliffs far above between them and the sky seemed to stand spell-bound.

"I reckon they got it hot and heavy just in time!" cried Dick, when he had got up with Hines and was asked what the report like that of a cannon meant. And he told the way he worked the trick.

It must have done great havoc they both thought for they rode on two hours at a good gait without tiring out their horses and did not hear a sound of pursuit.

They began to hope that they would be allowed to reach the mine unmolested but when it grew very dark along toward ten or eleven o'clock, as they waited to water in a shallow stream, they heard the clatter of horses' feet in their rear coming on at a furious rate.

"It is as good a place as we'll find for it—we will make a stand here!" cried Dick. "Every man face to the rear, fire short in their faces and keep it up till I tell you to go! Silence—wait till they're close up!"

The trainmen were in the dense shadows of trees, just beyond the stream—a pistol-shot away, not more. And Dick knew the moment the pursuers reached water they would crowd in together to let their horses drink.

He was right. The instant they heard the splash of water, the Indians who were in the rear checked up and as more came up they crowded in thick without regard to order.

"Now!" cried Dick and his magazine gun pumped the lead right into the yelling mass. It was fearful the way the boys rolled in the fire and it came so sudden, so utterly unexpected the Indians never returned a shot, or could not in that plunging mass of dying men and horses.

For full two minutes the fire was kept up and then Dick, satisfied he had given the foe a terrible check, gave the word to be off and away his party dashed, out of sight and hearing of pursuit.

"Splendidly done. One or two more checks like that will wipe them out if there's a thousand!" cried Hines in joy as the party sped along.

"They're stronger than I thought!" said Dick, a half-hour later. "I hear them again, but they come more cautiously. They will not ride into another trap. If they'll hold off one hour more, we'll be at the mine. We will let our horses out, their level best—we may run in ahead without another shot."

"The road broadens as we go on and for a little ways before we reach the mine, it is almost open country! So you see we must keep the lead," he added.

"You had best lead the head of the column!" said Hines. "If we get off the road and are passed, heaven help the few that are ahead of us. We have almost all the fighting force here you know!"

Dick did know it, and much against his will left the post of danger and took the lead in front. The pace told and the panting horses more than once staggered as they pressed on. And a part were travel-worn and the best could not be put to their fastest gait or the others would be left behind.

"At last—at last I see lights on the hill. The mine is but two miles away!"

The word was passed back and hope brightened in every heart as the column struggled on.

They were now in a valley which fronted the mountain range on which the Magdalena works were situated. Over a short grassy sward they galloped, heading for a peak where Dick knew they would strike a graded road that led up the hill toward the mine and the cluster of buildings around its mouth.

The hoofs of the horses made scarce any sound now and they could not tell whether their pursuers were far or near.

When last heard on rocky ground they seemed at least a half-mile away—the sounds were so faint.

"Push on—close up, keep in column, men!" cried Dick looking back, and once more he urged his weary beast.

"We're doing all we can!" cried Hines from the rear. "Some of the horses are about gone up!"

Hardly had he spoken, when away in the darkness, on their right a sound was heard that went like a knell of doom to the ear of Tombstone Dick.

It was the rush of horsemen—how many he knew not—he could not see man or beast. No

war-cry—not a word, not a shot—nothing to tell where to direct fire, or who were passing or how many.

Madly he drove the spurs into his own horse and as he fired his pistols toward the spot where he had noted the sounds—he shouted:

"Follow me all who can!"

Hines and a few more, not over eight or ten had horses who could go his gait, closed in on Dick and firing as he had done, dashed forward with him.

Lights were waved upon the hillside. Those at the mine evidently thought their friends were near and fired to tell that they were coming.

"Oh if we only know where to strike the grade all will yet be well!" said Dick. "We can hold the road once in it. But if our foes have ever been there and head us off, they'll be first at the mine!"

No longer could they hear the strange horsemen who had passed. They did not try to listen, but drove their horses to all that could be got out of them.

Straight as an arrow Tombstone Dick headed for the point where he knew the grade rose from the plain. He knew it only by a dark peak that rose clear against the sky.

Still the friendly lights waved to and fro up on the hillside at the mine.

What agony in that noble heart. The mother he idolized, another whom he had begun almost to worship, though he had made no sign in all their close daily intercourse, and the noble old man for whom he had worked so faithfully, might all be stricken down when he was so near, ready to die in their defense.

His horse which never before had felt lash or spur, groaned as it leaped along, its very life-tide ebbing at every jump, still held the lead.

"Keep up—for dear life's sake. Keep up—we are almost to the grade!" he shrieked.

The lights above were all grouped together now. Lanterns doubtless in the hands of those who expected them.

"We come! We come! Look out for foes ahead of us!" shouted Dick as he reached hard ground, and he knew he was close to the grade.

His horse fell even as he spoke, but on his feet as it dropped, he rushed on, for he heard clattering hoofs going up the graded road, and a mocking laugh sounded in his ear, and a voice cried out:

"Take it easy—the race is ours!"

Guided by the sound, Dick poured shot after shot out of his rifle, as he rushed on afoot, followed by but two of his party who were near, and they were both like him, dismounted.

Not a shot was returned. The wily foe would not risk a flash which would show where they were.

Now he was on the grade—the road only wide enough for two wagons to pass, was walled by a high cliff one side—a chasm yawned on the other.

"Make a stand here—gather all the men and let no one pass down. I go on alone—fast as I can; follow when the force is up, but hold the road at all hazards!"

This was gasped out, when Hines a moment after, rushed up to his side. Then, at a speed which seemed superhuman, the half-breed ran on up the hill, refilling the magazine of his gun as he ran.

Hines fired his revolver to show his men where he was, and as they came straggling in, some yet on panting horses and others on foot, he formed them as he had been told to do, but as soon as he had a squad of ten he moved up the grade, leaving others to rally on and hold the road where it rose from the plain.

On, he could not leave the grade, it was the only road, the lights now in sight, then lost to view, as the road wound in curves up the hill, he hurried, almost spent and breathless.

Suddenly a shrill shriek—a woman's cry reached his ear.

Then, as if an echo it came so quick, a hoarse shout that he knew came from the lips of Tombstone Dick, far, far up the hill ahead of him.

Following the single scream came several distinct shots, one close after another, and some harsh cries as of men in angry conflict, and then, for a moment all was still.

"God help the helpless!" groaned Hines, as he struggled on.

Suddenly the clash of hoofs, came clear upon the night air, up the grade.

Hines formed his men with arms ready for instant use, across the whole width of the grade. Just as he did so, away up the hill where now no lights were seen, there were two flashes, one almost with the other and two sharp shots followed quick as thought. And again that wild shriek rung out on the air.

Not half a minute later, a band of horsemen came rushing down the road, not pausing when Hines shouted:

"Halt, or I fire!"

They rode almost on him and his men as he fired at short range, almost in rifle's length, and down went three horses and their riders, with curses loud and bitter on their lips, while the others rushed down the grade.

In a second Hines knew he had the Tombstone roughs in the wounded men, and, he did not tell

his men to hold a hand as they finished the work begun with their rifles, only one of the fallen men getting in a shot in his defense.

Soon—far down the road came two more rattling volleys, and then a ringing cheer which he felt sure came from his own men.

A minute he paused and saw that the three outlaws he had stopped were beyond doing further harm, and then calling his men to follow he pushed on up the hill.

A little way up he came on a riderless horse, standing in the road. It tried to move as he came near, but fell dying to the ground.

"Help—help!" came again from up the road in a woman's shriek, and as he rushed on he heard the same voice cry out:

"Oh Dick, brave Dick, are you dying?"

CHAPTER XLV.

A DESPERATE STRUGGLE.

ONWARD and upward, over the steep grade, Hines rushed, his men close behind, and a minute later he came upon one whom he knew, by her dress and voice, to be Magdalena. She was holding up the head of a man who seemed to be dead, for he did not move.

Another man lay but a few steps away, feebly moaning, as if fatally hurt.

"Who is here? Are you hurt, Miss Conrad?" asked Hines.

"No, sir—only bruised by a fall when my captor was shot down. Secure that villain—do not kill him—save him for a prison-cell and the gallows-tree!"

She pointed to the man who moaned on the ground near by.

"Is it the wretch Raymond?" he asked.

"Raymond, alias *Mortimer*! Our deadliest foe on earth! Brave Dick shot him down as he carried me off on his horse; but I fear Dick is killed, and by his accursed hand!"

This was her answer, in thrilling tones. Then she added:

"He struck down my dear father—whether he lives or not I do not know!"

Lights were seen as armed men, bearing them, hurried down from the mine, and they were close at hand.

A woman was in the coming throng. It was Mrs. Hartman. As Magdalena saw her she shrieked out:

"Oh, dear Mrs. Hartman! I am afraid the wretch who struck my father down has also killed poor Dick. He breathes—but he cannot speak!"

"If he has, if he has—no has killed his own son!" cried the Indian woman. "There is the monster who deceived a young, ignorant girl—got her to leave her school and friends, and then left her and her helpless babe penniless in a cold and heartless world!"

And she flashed her lantern full in the face of Raymond, or Mortimer—we know him now by three names, for De Salv, is another. He lay stunned, half-conscious, with a leg shattered by the ball that gave his horse a mortal wound. For poor Dick had shot low to avoid hitting the lady the wretch was carrying off in his arms.

And he at the same instant sent a ball from one of his deadly derringers through the body of the heroic half-breed, who fell to the ground, and staggered forward to help him who had saved her.

"Her voice? Utsayah—I thought she died!" muttered the villain, whom Hines now dragged to the roadside next the cliff and disarmed.

For in his belt two revolvers and a knife yet rested and a second derringer dropped from his sleeve as he was lifted up.

"*Utsayah* lives to see you hang if you have killed her son!" cried Mrs. Hartman.

"My father—is he killed?" asked Magdalena of one of the men who held a light so Mrs. Hartman could see the face of her brave son.

"No, miss—he was only stunned, but he hurried us on to see if you could be found. Thank heaven you live!"

"Oh, if this brave man can live, I would be content to die!" she murmured.

"His heart beats—his eyes open—he lives!" sobbed his mother in hysterical joy.

"Water—water! It will help to revive him!" cried Magdalena.

A spring rippled out from the cliff close at hand.

A man brought his open hands full and dropped it in the face and on the upturned lips of the wounded man.

A shudder passed through his face and form—he tried to rise.

"Oh, keep still—keep still! You shall be carried if you can be moved!" cried Magdalena.

"You are safe. I am ready to die!" he said in a low tone, scarce above a whisper.

"You must not die! Live for my sake, live if you only can!" she cried, and before them all the fair girl pressed her lips upon his forehead.

He sighed and a look of inexpressible joy shone in his pale face.

Mr. Conrad, yet bleeding from a cruel rash on the side of his head, now came and with him the old mine superintendent bearing wine and a case of medicine.

Wine—a small glassful was poured down the throat of Tombstone Dick.

It revived him so that he saw and recognized Mr. Hines and Mr. Conrad.

"Are the outlaws driven off?" he feebly asked.

"Better yet, they are nearly all wiped out. Only one, with their Indian guide escaped. So my men report from below. We have the leader here helpless from your lucky shot!" said Hines.

"It is good. But guard the road below. The Apaches were hot on our trail. Guard the road—they can get here no other way!"

He could say no more. Faint from loss of blood, which was checked by his mother's hand as far as she could do it, he was raised on a litter of crossed rifles held by his own men who had now come up, and carried up the hill tenderly toward the house of the superintendent where Mr. Conrad had taken up his residence.

Mortimer, who would have bled to death, but for Hines passing a sash tightly over the wound in his leg, was lifted on a tried horse and carried where he

could be held a prisoner and doctored if it was thought worth while.

Hines, seeing his friend Dick so well cared for now took the duty of posting guard on his hands and secured the pass below with force enough to hold it, to stay there till relieved in the morning. For now it was after midnight. And he took command himself, to see there was no relaxation of vigilance.

By order of Mr. Conrad, with a guard over him, Mortimer was placed in another house, and Mrs. Hartman was told to keep secret from her son, the relationship of the man he had shot—the leader of the outlaws. For the wound of poor Dick was very serious—it hardly seemed possible he could live, and excitement at that stage would surely be fatal.

The rest of the morning, till light came, was a sleepless one, for it was all uncertain what that light would bring—whether the Apaches and the remnant of the outlaws would continue their hostilities, or, overawed by the loss of the white leader and so many warriors and men, withdraw and leave the mine and its people unmolested.

And sleepless eyes were watching the faint breathing of our brave hero, Tombstone Dick. Mrs. Hartman and Magdalena both sat by the bed on which he had been laid, and from time to time when pain woke him from his uneasy slumber, moistened his lips with wine, or gave him a few drops of the sedative prepared by Doctor Oatman, the mine superintendent, who was a physician and surgeon, by education and profession, and had first come West on account of his health, sorely afflicted with an asthma that in the East made him suffer terribly.

The prisoner, having had his leg set, slept under an opiate, but his sleep, even with its aid, was a restless one, and full of pain.

Day came at last, and its light was welcome to many a weary eye. As Mr. Hines scanned the valley below his post, he saw that quite a force of Indians had bivouacked in plain sight, but out of range of even his long rifle. Their ponies fed on the rich grass on the plains, and smoke came up from many a camp-fire where red-men cooked food for present use.

The lower post was relieved early by fresh men from the mine, and while the weary men who had such a hard run the night before, took food and then lay down to rest, their animals were fed grain and cared for in the corrals at the mine.

Mr. Hines had a brief talk with Tombstone Dick, cheering him up and cautiously refraining from saying anything to give him uneasiness as to the outlook down below.

He also went in to see Mortimer, who looked sullen and ugly, uncertain of the fate before him, and purposely kept ignorant that his Indian allies yet lingered in the vicinity.

He had asked his guard some questions, but the latter, by orders refused to talk with him. Food and drink were not denied him, but he soon knew that he would not have one friendly look or word in his hour of misery and pain.

The mother of Tombstone Dick after her first recognition, and the harsh words that followed it, would have no more to do with him and did not seem to care whether he lived or died.

Mr. Conrad, whom he had struck down with the butt of his rifle when he dashed up and seized poor Magdalena and dragged her upon his horse, was too angry yet to talk to the villain who had so deeply wronged him in the East and sought his utter ruin here.

The old merchant had perused the recovered papers sent by the English attorney, and saw the deep-laid plans of his *adversary* clerk to gain possession of his child and the fortune at all hazards. Human life was nothing to his criminal ambition—nothing too dark or too desperate for the villain to undertake.

But, through the cool daring and steady aim of Tombstone Dick, the wretch was now in his power, and he intended that he should be dealt with mercilessly, to the full extent of the laws he had broken—human and divine.

CHAPTER XLVI.

A RUSE.

AFTER the Indians and outlaws were so severely checked at the stone and brush barricade in the pass, by Tombstone Dick and Mr. Hines with their brave and well-arranged force, and Mr. Conrad and his daughter were sent on to the mine with a small escort, while the rest held Geronimo and Raymond at bay, the latter heard from an Indian, who had been there, that they were only a few hours' ride from the mine, if good horses were used.

And almost at the moment he spoke an Indian spy, who had been sent up among the cliffs by Geronimo, reported that two women, an old man, and six men of the fighting force, had gone on toward the mine, while the rest stood to arms back of the barricade.

Instantly Raymond formed a plan for future action, in which he hoped to recover his papers and money, and secure the person of the girl he so madly determined to possess. He knew nearly all the available force from the mine had come on to help the trainmen. A spy counted them when they came. If once he got between this body and the mine with a body of his best men, all was clear sailing. He could dash into the mine and carry everything before him ere help could reach his intended victims.

He picked from among his men fifteen of the most daring and steady—the best horsemen and the best mounted. These he ordered to take the best possible care of their horses—to groom and feed them for a long, hard ride.

And he also told these men to hold themselves aloof from all fighting—not to fire themselves or horses. In short, to hold themselves for a special purpose to which he would lead them. And, binding them to keep the secret from the rest, he promised each of the chosen fifteen one thousand dollars if success crowned their enterprise.

These arrangements made, he waited impatiently for the Apache reinforcements to arrive. It was known they were fast approaching—a smoke signal had told that story just after day dawned.

They came a little after mid-day, and Chief Geronimo rejoined, for he said as soon as their horses were fed and rested, he would attack his foes, no matter how well they were posted.

As the fresh warriors arrived, a shriek broke from the lips of Ignacia, and she rushed forward to a cap-

tive, who was hardly able to sit upright in the saddle to which he was tied, hand and foot.

"Manolo! Manolo, my boy! He lives, but why is he lound up like a dog?"

She turned fiercely upon Geronimo as she asked the question.

He ordered the release of the young man, and then asked how he came to be with them.

He had come to the main camp, they said, on the trail of the white men. He had asked for Ignacia, his mother, and for Raymond, the white chief. They knew he was an escaped captive, and had treated him as such, bringing him along to be dealt with by Geronimo.

Manolo was so weak from his long and rapid journey, and his rude treatment since he joined the Apaches, that he could not stand on his feet when he was untied and lifted from his horse.

In her own arms Ignacia carried him to a shelter where she had been nursing and caring for wounded men and warriors, and calling to Raymond, she said:

"Behold your son and mine! Open your stores, and get something to give him strength!"

"His son? That man my father?" asked Manolo, in wonder.

"Yes. He is the husband I mourned as lost to me forever. He is your father," said Ignacia, as she raised his head upon a pillow of blankets and bathed his face with water.

Raymond came in a few moments with wine, which revived the nearly fainting boy.

"Where is the watch and chain I gave you?" he asked.

"Cocine, the sub-chief of the Apaches who bound me on my horse, has it and all my money. He took them from me when I went to them like a man and asked for you and my mother."

Ignacia called to Geronimo and told him this.

Cocine was called up; he had the golden chain about his own neck.

Quickly he was told by Geronimo to restore everything to the son of Ignacia and the white chief.

Sulkily, with a frown on his dark face, he obeyed. With his spoil, he felt as if he was the richest man in the tribe—without it he was poor again.

A purse full of gold and the pack-horse, with such stores as had not been used, and the saddle-horse of Manolo were called for and restored. But Manolo had made an enemy, and Cocine but waited his time to prove it.

Now Raymond was relieved of a trouble he had not before known how to get over. On the journey, or in battle, it mattered not—everywhere Ignacia clung to his side, rode with him, and would not leave him for an instant. And he had dreaded the jealousy of her nature, which was sure to be aroused when he had captured Magdalena. He was satisfied that the power of a mother's love would now keep Ignacia with her helpless son, and he could take his men into action, while she remained with Manolo in the hospital camp.

And he showed renewed tenderness to her and great anxiety for the boy, to lull her jealousies to sleep.

When Geronimo sent out his spies and learned that the whites were preparing to retreat, he prepared for an early attack. Cocine volunteered to lead thirty warriors, picked men out of his one hundred, to charge and tear down the barricade while the rest followed with his horses and their own.

This suited Raymond. By presents he had secured the Indian guide who knew the way to the mine and he hoped to be able by keeping his horses well in hand and out of all *mélés* to pass the trainmen and be first to reach the mine.

Once there he felt sure he could carry off his prize. And with her once in his power and his money and papers recovered, he meant to go where Ignacia would never see him again.

Treachery was the leading trait in his selfish nature.

Thus—when the attack was made on the barricade, Raymond was in the rear with a part of his men—Jones just ahead with the rest, while Cocine led the advance.

Raymond was out of range when the volley was fired before Tombstone Dick fell back and only just coming in sight of the barricade when Cocine and his yelling band were clambering over it. And thence, in safety he saw the blinding blaze of fire which carried Indians, rocks and all up into the air scattering death all about the narrow road.

Of all that band of thirty braves but few escaped unhurt and many mangled all to pieces lay in fragments on the blood-stained rocks.

Geronimo, almost dazed by the flash and the thunder of the explosion, reined back his horse until it nearly fell over on him and groaned when he saw that the pick of his band lay dead or crippled before him. He cursed the hour when he had listened to the words of Raymond and accepted his pay.

Nothing but disaster seemed to meet him on the trail. But wrath succeeded sorrow. Furious thoughts of revenge filled his heart.

Ordering the wounded carried back to the shelter where Ignacia held post, he bade fresh warriors clear the way and then dashed forward in pursuit of his flying enemies. He led the way with his Indians, Raymond followed, cunningly keeping his picked men and horses in the rear and careful not to push them, or risk them under fire before he was ready to call on them for a dash.

Thus, when Geronimo and his band entered the creek and got the second fearful check from the rifles of those they were following, Raymond and his men were not under fire at all. But when the Indians rallied and pressed on and he knew he was fast getting near the mine, then he decided it was time to "pull on his reins" and use his spurs.

Closing up, he passed the Indians and went to the front with ease. His horses, the best in order of all in the band, went fast and free and on the soft sward in sight of the lights on the hill shot by Tombstone Dick like wind-swept clouds or invisible specters in the gloom.

He was going up the grade, and halted to listen for his pursuers, when he heard the horse of Tombstone Dick reach the hard ground and fall, and the half-drawn shout of the half breed prompted his sarcastic laugh and taunting reply.

Then he pushed on. Mr. Conrad and his daughter, waving lights in front of the great house at the mine, were looking for their friends.

"Here they come—heaven bless them! Here they come!" he heard Mr. Conrad say, as he and his men in close order galloped up.

"Yes, here we are!" he sternly said, and he swung the breech of his rifle in a terrible blow full in the old man's head. But for a very thick, strong hat, the blow had been death.

Mrs. Hartman stood like one in a trance as the lights fell on Raymond's face, but Magdalena screamed in terror when she recognized her father's deadliest foe.

Bending forward in his saddle as his horse plunged to her side, Raymond snatched the girl from the ground and lifted her in a dead faint in front of him.

"Wheel and charge down the hill! Clear the way, and back to Geronimo's support!" he yelled to his men, as three or four wild shots fired by the Indians men flew around them.

And in a second away they went down the grade—Raymond, with his helpless burden, in the rear.

"Halt!" he heard a stern voice say as his men thundered on, half-way down.

He slipped a deringer from sleeve to hand, just as Tombstone Dick fired, and as he felt himself hit and his horse staggered with a death shot, he fired on the man who spoke.

Then, still clinging to his victim, he fell over from his horse and dropped for a moment unconscious on the ground, stunned by his fall on the rocky road.

We know the rest. In a previous chapter we have told the story. A little way down the flying outlaws met Hines and his little party, and three went down under their fire. At the lower end of the road they tried to rush through the men massed there. Only one man, and he with a mortal wound, got through, of the white men. The Indian guide, lying flat on his horse, escaped without a scratch.

CHAPTER XLVII.

A VOLUNTEER.

Two days had gone by. Tombstone Dick, yet very low, but with a faint chance of recovery, lay in the coolest, best room in the great house, nursed in alternate watches by Magdalena Conrad and his mother, who alone were allowed access to him by the superintendent doctor, who was exerting all his skill to save him.

The trainmen and the Tombstone escort under Hines were resting as well as they could, with heavy guard duty to perform. For Geronimo, in large force, with the balance of the outlaws under Jones, was camped on the plain below, where the accursed fiends fed on cattle pastured by the miners, and danced defiant war-dances in sight of those they had failed so far to conquer.

The Apache chief acted as if he had come to stay. He knew he had the advantage in numbers—his ponies, except a band kept saddled for instant use in case of a sally from the hill, reveled in rich grass; he had plenty of fat, fresh beef from the captured cattle, fine water, all the wood he needed. Could he not stay till he starved out those on the hill, cut off as they were from the road out for help or provisions?

He surely thought so. He had brought up his wounded and taken care of his dead. Barring for revenge, he would have charged up the hill to wipe out his enemies, had he not to face sure death in the attempt.

The grade was barricaded and strongly guarded night and day. And no other way was there to reach the mine, but up the face of the lofty perpendicular cliff which fronted the narrow plateau on which the horses stood.

The men from Tombstone were terribly amazed. They had expected after a rest of one or two days at the mine to turn their horses homeward and return to their various avocations. But a grim hedger of lances, a forest of arrows, a shower of rifle balls frowned between them and home.

What could be done? Hines could not solve the conundrum. But Mart Wilder was too old a frontiersman to despair.

"Boys," said he, "you've grain here for your stock to last twelve or fifteen days. And you can feed enough to keep the animals strong and ready for use. Now I can go afoot back to Tucson in six days, creepin' off at night over the hills where a horse can find no footin' and the reds can't see me. In Tucson there's always a cavalry regiment and General Crook knows me. I was Post Guide under him, when he was only a cap'n! He'll send help when I tell him your fix—bet your sweet lives, he will!"

"What do you think of it, sir?" asked Mr. Hines, speaking to Mr. Conrad, who stood near.

"It seems to be our only hope," said the old merchant.

"Then, boss, I go. I'd like one man to volunteer for company, not that I'm afraid to try a lone haul but two would make the long tramp more cheerful like. And if reds tied to corral us, we could stand back to back with our Winchesters and make it hot for a small tea-party."

A half dozen men volunteered and Mart chose one who had been his partner in many a hunt and on more than one long prospecting tour.

Then three large canteens each were selected to fill with water before they reached the dry plains, where they would find none for days, a flask each of strong brandy for "snake-bites" Mart said a small pack of dried meat and another of bread and a good store of ammunition for their repeating rifles and revolvers.

These were their preparations. Each carried a pocket compass and flint and steel to use when they wanted a smoke, or had to halt to rest, so they could make a little coffee in the cups they carried.

As soon as light set in, they started up the mountain, a slow and tedious task in the darkness. Once on its "backbone" they could go faster and head toward the distant plains which they must cross to reach their destination.

Mart's last words were—"The bugler will tell you when we're near—just lay low and laugh when you see the reds rise to 'fine the dance!'"

After these two noble-hearted men had departed on their perilous mission, Mr. Conrad turned to Hines and said:

"I think I have mastered my feelings enough to be able to command my anger in a talk with our scoundrel prisoner. I wish you to witness the interview."

"I'll do so," said Hines. "But if I had the 'say'

in the matter, I'd swing him from a limb over the cliff, where his red allies could see him hang, even as they can see the ravens feed on the carcasses I threw off the grade where we killed the outlaw fiends!"

"Death would be a mercy to the fate before him," said Mr. Conrad. "He raves now in the agony of a shattered limb and a disappointed heart. He had triumphed and I should have lost my child, but for Hartman—the noblest man on earth, if he has Indian blood in his veins."

"There is no better. He is a pure American! No one can gainsay that, and it is decided with his mother that Dick shall never know what we know in regard to his father. It was lucky Dick was unconscious when she recognized that wounded wretch! He thinks, as all in Tombstone have supposed, his mother is a widow."

"Yes—it is best so. Come on—I hate to talk to the dog, but I must. I can't let him lay there in peace, after he has done so much to wrong me. He shall at least suffer while his last victim trembles between life and death."

Together Hines and Conrad entered the low room in a cottage which overlooked the cliff.

With his leg in splinters, dressed by the doctor as skillfully as it could be done, the man lay on a narrow cot near the window, where the air could come in on his fever-flushed face.

He could see Conrad entering the door, without turning his eyes. He did not know Hines. A defiant look flashed from his eyes when they advanced, but he did not speak.

"Murderer! Do you know the son of that Indian maiden, whom in her childish beauty you inveigled from her school, your son, shot down by your cruel hand, is dying?"

"I hope so. One enemy more sent where others have gone, to eternal perdition!" he answered, bitterly.

"Wretch! Are you utterly heartless?"

"Yes—I hope so."

"Do you know I hold the papers which you murdered Clarence Wilson to possess?"

"I did not murder the cockney fool. An Indian did it."

"Yes—but hired by your money, or rather the money you stole from me."

"Embezzled. It is a softer word," sneered the villain.

"I have recovered twenty thousand, with the papers, which tell me that in spite of your fiendish machinations, I am now a millionaire."

"You are lucky. That is all. And, coward-like, you come here thinking to tantalize me. Brave—brave heroes both, to crow over a fallen enemy. Why do you not drag me out and shoot or hang me at once, and end this accursed misery? You can do no more."

"Oh, yes I can!" said Mr. Conrad. "Death would end your suffering. No criminal as bad as you believes in any hereafter. But a life-long imprisonment, on meager fare, at hard labor under brutal keepers, will outdo ten thousand deaths. And that fate lies before you. Indicted for arson, theft and forgery, the first indictment alone chains you for life. Hanging would be peace—at least as soon as it was over. It is a fate too merciful for you."

The prisoner groaned—the sweat in cold drops started on his brow.

"Ha! You can feel what is coming, can you?"

"Bah! It was not what you said, troubled me. It is this infernal leg—the pain is enough to kill me!"

"Then endure it. Every groan I hear from your lips is music to my ear!"

"Then I groan no more! I will bear my pain in silence after this! But you are a fool to let me live!"

"Perhaps! I am responsible for my folly! Do you know every man you brought up this hill died before he reached the bottom—that the vulture and coyotes now feed on their unburied bodies?"

"So? Well, the vultures and coyotes are having a good time, aren't they? Any more news?"

"No!" said the merchant, turning away in disgust. "This interview is ended!"

And the scoundrel laughed when they went out and closed the door behind them, passing the sentinel who stood there.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

AN EXCITING SCENE.

MANOLO was better. His mother carefully nursed him, gave him wine from a small store Raymond had left, and strong broths made from the crushed bones of antelope, with all the marrow and muscle attached. Tea also from strengthening herbs used by the Indians.

But she was very sad. The Indian who had charged up the hill with Raymond, told her her husband was killed with the rest of his men. That he saw him fall from his horse. And Geronimo now looked on Jones as the leader of the few white men left.

Yet one day when she had wandered far from the camp toward the cliff beneath the mountain in search of herbs for the wounded warriors she was caring for, she saw something which sent a thrill of hope through her sad heart.

When she was looking at a small white house near the front of the cliff, she saw a red streamer or flag flutter from a single window fronting the cliff. Twice it fluttered to her view—then was withdrawn.

Raymond had worn a sash of that color about his waist, to sustain his pistols and knife when he rode away the last time she had seen him. He might be there a prisoner, wounded and suffering.

Long she gazed at the window, and went as close as she dared without exposing herself to a rifle-shot. Again the red scarf was seen. She waved a small blanket she wore about her shoulders and then hurried off to find Manolo in the shelter she had built for him.

"I believe your father lives and is a prisoner to the people at the mines!" she said.

Manolo looked at her in wonder. He had believed when none returned from that fatal charge, all must be dead. But he heard her explanations of the signals she had seen and that she believed she recognized his scarf.

"I will wait one day more until I am stronger and then I will go up there and see. If my father lives and is a prisoner I will rescue him!" he said.

"How can you get there without being shot as an enemy?" she asked.

"I do not know, just yet. I must think. I will make some plan!"

She was satisfied. She kissed him fondly, and then turned away to her duties. She was regarded with reverence by the Indians. Her "medicine" was good they believed, and many, with fearful wounds had great relief from her skillful and tender treatment.

Geronimo did not much regret the loss of her husband—in truth he was not a bit sorry. For he believed the White Chief had the influence of an evil spirit hanging over him—that he carried bad luck wherever he went. Next he thought, if Raymond was gone, Ignacia would always stay in his family. And she was very useful to him.

That night, before he retired to his rest, Manolo told his mother what plan he had adopted to get up to the mine in safety and unsuspected. Once there, he would soon learn if his father was a prisoner. If he was, he would rescue him. He had formed a plan also for that.

His first plan was to dress as he had dressed when he really was an Indian captive—much in the Apache style.

Then to simulate an escape from them, to ride at topmost speed toward the guard at foot of the grade, followed by a horde of warriors shooting and yelling at him, while he waved a white rag and strove by signs to ask for help.

Of course no shot would be fired at him and he would be allowed to escape, but he would show, when he got to the guard, bullet-holes in his clothes previously made, to show how narrowly he had got off with life.

Geronimo, when Ignacia proposed this, was bitterly opposed at first. But when she told him plainly, if he would not favor her plan and help Manolo to carry it out, she would herself go and try to see her husband, he consented. If Manolo was killed it was no loss to him, while if she went and did not return, he would miss her sadly.

So he consented. And Manolo made his arrangements. He chose a band of Indians to play their part and select the horse he would ride. While he talked to the Indians, he did not notice the sub-chief, Cocine, almost the sole survivor of the explosion at the stone barricade. He limped painfully around, one eye had been destroyed and a broken arm was in a sling. He had not forgotten that he had to return the property he had taken and coveted so much, to Manolo, and he hated him bitterly.

Cocine drew one of the Indians off and had a long talk with him. It boded no good to the young Mexican.

In the morning, an hour or two before noon, Mr. Conrad and his daughter were walking on the plateau in front of the mine, enjoying a cool breeze from the northeast, and glancing from time to time at the annoyance on the plains below—the Indians who had stolen their rations of beef, and remained a standing nuisance to their eyes.

Magdalena had her father's fine marine glass in her hand and was looking through it.

"There is a strange commotion down there among the Indians," she said. "They are racing horses, I guess; look how they rush and yell. One is ahead of the rest a long way, but the others run their horses like wild deer in chase. Mercy on me—they shoot at the one who is ahead! He may be a messenger who is coming to us; he is trying all he can to escape from them. Look—look, papa, he heads right for the out-guard at the grade! Oh, how he rides, erect like a white man, though he seems to be an Indian. How his pursuers shoot and yell. Why don't he lay down on his horse Indian-fashion, and take some care of his life? Oh—dear—they gain. He will never reach the barricade alive! One of his pursuers is close up. He has shot down the horse of the poor fugitive! He is lost, he is lost!"

She fairly screamed in her excitement, and trembled from head to foot, but she kept her glass to her eyes.

"Brave fellow!" she cried, "he has turned and shot his nearest pursuer's horse. He is on foot, but runs, oh, how swiftly, for our lines! Ah—our men have watched him—he waves a white flag, the guard fires, but it is at his pursuers; they pause, they fall back, they have given up the chase. Thank Heaven, whoever it is, the poor fellow is safe from that murderous chase!"

Magdalena was breathless from agitation. Mr. Hines had come up in time to witness the last part of this episode, and to hear her excited comments.

He sprang on his horse, which was hitched to a tree near by, and galloped down the grade to see who had come into the lines thus, almost by a miracle, for when the fugitive's horse went down, it seemed as if he must be killed or taken.

"He is received kindly by our men. One runs to get water for him from the spring. He must be hurt—one of the men seems to be holding him up!" continued Magdalena, who still gazed through her glass, and saw the fugitive enter within the barricade.

"Ah—Mr. Hines has reached the guard. He dismounts—they lift the man on his horse, and he is returning up the hill. Oh, papa, I believe it is some messenger for us who has ridden through that Indian camp. He is a hero, whoever he is!"

"We will soon see!" said her father smiling. He had got used to his daughter's heroic sympathies of late. He heard them expressed strongly and frequently.

Mr. Hines walked by the side of his horse, holding the bridle, while the stranger in the saddle seemed so weak Mr. Hines had to steady him with his hand to keep him there.

"Who is it?" asked Mr. Conrad, as his friend approached.

"A poor Mexican captive who has escaped from the Apaches. He speaks only Spanish and I'm but a poor scholar in that tongue, but so far as I can understand him he says they treated him cruelly and he risked life to get away. He has been hit with a ball in his side, but it is a flesh wound and though it bleeds badly, the doctor will soon check it. His pursuers shot to kill. His dead horse proves that! Call Doctor Oatman quick as you can. There is a spare room in the cottage by the cliff where that villain is kept, isn't there?"

"Yes—take him there while I go for the doctor.

There is a bed in the next room to that of the prisoner!"

The prisoner—what a flash shone in the eyes of the new-comer when that word was heard. Had any of them noticed it, they would have believed he understood more than Spanish.

Both Magdalena's eyes were fixed on the slender stream of dark blood trickling down on the saddle and Hines was busy leading the horse toward the cottage.

The good old doctor was there almost as soon as they. He spoke Spanish well, and was interested in his patient the instant he answered his first question.

"He is a Mexican of good blood!" he said. "He speaks pure Castilian, not the mongrel tongue of the lower classes!"

He had him helped to bed and instantly steeped a pad of lint in a strong styptic and bound it on the wound. He also gave him a glass of diluted brandy, to strengthen him, for he acted very weak—scarce able to stand when leaning on the friendly arm of Mr. Hines.

"We will leave him to quiet rest. In an hour or two I will see him again!" said the doctor, and he followed Hines and Mr. Conrad out, closing the door.

A minute later the wounded man sprang to his feet and going to the ceiling of the front room, knocked gently.

"Who is there?" asked a faint voice which he instantly recognized.

"It is Manolo, father, come to save you or die!"

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE DOCTOR'S PATIENTS.

"THANK Heaven! But be cautious. If the sentinel at the door hears us—we are both lost. I am crippled and can come no nearer to talk with you!" "No matter—be still, I have a plan to save you! Keep up good heart. I am here as a wounded Mexican fugitive from the Apaches—they think here I can speak no English—wait in patience till I can act!"

"I will, my son—I will!" came low and faint from the other room.

And Manolo slipped quickly back to bed.

None too soon either, for after a gentle knock the door was opened and Magdalena entered with some soup and fine white bread and a glass of wine on a tray.

"Poor man—I feel so sorry for you. The doctor says this will not hurt you!" said she in a tender tone, with a look of pity, as she approached his bed.

"No entiendo Ingles, senorita!" he said in a tone which he knew could be overheard in the other room.

"Poor fellow—I forgot. The doctor did say you spoke no English and that is what you mean to say I suppose. I am so sorry I do not speak Spanish. If he is here long enough I will try to learn it. Take this wine—and some soup!"

She indicated the last wish, by signs, as she offered the wine and held the soup so he could dip the spoon in the bowl.

He drank the wine and with a grateful look in his eyes, said:

"Gracias! Dios te bendiga!" ("Thanks, God's blessing on thee.")

Pleased, though he would not take the soup, that he had drunk the wine, she arranged his pillows, fixed the curtain of his window better so the light would not fall in his eyes and then went softly out.

"Poor man—he is very weak—he lost so much blood!" she said to the sentinel as she passed him, near the door.

Manolo smiled when he heard her words. He never had tried deceit before, but he thought he had made a good beginning, here.

In an hour Doctor Oatman came and was gratified to find he was no weaker. He bade him lay still and not to try to rise. "I will not weary you to-night," he said, "but to-morrow you shall tell me all your story. And I and my friends here will help to send you back to your people!"

The doctor prided himself on his Spanish and justly, for he spoke it well and he would have gladly talked longer with his patient had he deemed him strong enough to bear it.

"At sunset," he continued, "I will have some toast and tea brought to you. Then left to a good night of sleep, you will get along nicely!"

"Es mi esperanza!" ("It is my hope!") was the low reply, in the same dulcet tongue.

Again Manolo was left alone. He heard the doctor enter the front room and he noticed by ear he turned no key, merely lifted a latch. The prisoner was considered too helpless to require any guard but a sentinel outside his door.

"Well, sir—how does your leg feel?" asked the doctor in a far different tone from that which he had used in the other room.

"Curse it, it hurts awful now! What did you wake me up for? I've been asleep for three or four hours and when I'm asleep, I'm free from pain!"

The words came more like a growl from some untamable beast, than an expression from a human being.

"Your leg will pain, till the bone is knitted. I did not come in to annoy you. Here are a couple of pills of morphia. Take them after you have had your supper and you will sleep again. No one will disturb you and in the morning I will put on a cooling lotion if it is much inflamed!"

"Thank you. I know I'm cross as a bear with a sore head, but I'm in trouble and can't get used to it!"

"Well, bear up like a man. Cursing and swearing will not better your case!"

"I know that, doctor, as well as you can tell me. But it kind o' lets the steam off, and seems to ease my mind if it don't my body!"

"Well—keep as quiet as you can!"

The doctor left, and did not return until about sunset, when he had toast and tea sent in to his Mexican patient, and broth and coffee to Raymond. He saw to these things himself, invariably, and then arranged their pillows and beds for the night, so as to make them as comfortable as he could.

For a doctor, he was almost too tender-hearted.

If I'm sick or hurt, give me the doctor or surgeon who has a heart of stone and nerves of steel. He'll put you through on scientific principles, and cure or kill you in a hurry and not mercifully dawdle along

until medicine is a nausea and life a burden. I've said it and I mean it. And I've had many a chance to know just what sickness and suffering is.

But—back to my story. Just as night fell, the sentinel who had been on post for four hours, was relieved and the man who took his place received this caution:

"Keep wide awake, allow no one but the doctor to come past your post. You know him. Beckly will relieve you when your time is up at midnight. If there's any trouble, call the sergeant of the guard!"

"All right!" said the sentinel. "May I smoke if I want to?"

"Yes—there's no orders against that!"

Every word was distinctly understood by the occupants of both rooms. And Manolo, whose keen eyes had taken in every point in the vicinity, as he rode up, began preparations to "get in" his work, just as quiet began to reign about the mine buildings.

Rising, he dressed—for the doctor had disrobed him to examine his wounds—or at least partially disrobed.

From out his pockets he took some strong thongs of stretched buckskin—almost as large as whip-cord. Then a bit of hard wood, a little larger than an ordinary knife-handle. To each end of this he securely fastened a strong thong. The others, he separated out and placed on his person where he could quickly find and use them, though in the dark.

Then he took the revolver he had brought, and been allowed to keep, from under his pillow and removed the percussion caps, lest it should go off by accident, or he be tempted to use it when its report might ruin every chance.

With the barrel in his hand, ready to use it in the shape of a club, he stole softly to his door. Noiselessly he opened just a crack, so he could look out. The sentinel stood not two yards away, smoking and looking up dreamily at the sky. Manolo opened the door wider. It made no noise. The sentinel smoked on.

Suddenly, with a cat-like step, in moccasin-clad feet, Manolo was at his side. One hand grasped his rifle, the other brought the butt of the revolver heavily against his head right under the ear.

The sentinel dropped like a bullock stricken by a butcher's maul. In an instant the gag was in his mouth securely fastened by the strong cords behind his neck. His hands were then tied behind him. His feet made fast and his rifle hidden under the floor of the house.

Then like a shadow Manolo dashed to a shed where he had seen saddles hanging close to a large horse corral. To each saddle was fastened a long lasso or lariat, such as all plainsmen use. Knotting these together he soon had a line which he knew would reach to the bottom below the cliff. Knotting the upper end about a tree just by the edge of the precipice, all was ready.

Hurrying to the room where Raymond lay, trembling with excitement lest after all some one would come and mar brave Manolo's plan, he said:

"I know from what I overheard, that you have a broken leg. I shall hurt you I know, when I carry you out and lower you over the cliff, but you must not cry out or groan aloud, or you may cause our discovery and we are lost!"

"Go on—go on quick. I will die before I open my lips!" said Raymond. "Do not delay a moment. Are your lines ready?"

"Yes, and all fast. Now—be still!"

Carefully as he could, Manolo raised the form of his crippled father. It had grown light by hardship and misery, and he carried it with ease. His weakness was forgotten. The form he carried quivered with untold agony—the sufferer did not groan or even whisper.

"In a minute more he laid Raymond down by the tree to which he had fastened one end of his lowering line. The other end he now secured under the arms of Raymond.

"I am ready to lower," he said. "When you touch the ground below, pull on the line and I will be with you in a few seconds!"

"Lower away—do it quick, or I shall faint with pain!"

Manolo put a pocket flask of liquor to his lips.

Then he lowered away steadily, careful not to fray the line against the sharp-edged rock. It seemed a long time going down, but at last he felt a jerk on the hide rope. He knew Raymond was safe.

Then, grasping the rope in both his hands, clinging with a grip like the clutch of death, he went down hand over hand. It was a fearful descent, a terrible strain on nerves already overtaxed. But at last he touched the earth.

"Father!" he said—"my father, the work is done. You are safe!"

He got no answer. Raymond had fainted. Manolo did not wait to try to revive him there. He raised the inanimate form on his shoulders and heading for the part of the Indian camp where his mother had put up a shelter, he staggered on. In the darkness he had to walk slow and careful, or he would stumble and fall.

He went on as he judged near half a mile, when a groan told him Raymond was at least conscious of pain. He laid him down and put the flask again to his lips.

"Boy—boy, this is terrible! I cannot live through it!" moaned the sufferer.

"Yes you will; bear up. We are near my mother's camp. I can carry you there in a few minutes more. Bear up—you are safe from your enemies!"

"Ha! ha! They cannot hang or shoot or imprison now. Ha! ha! I am free—I am free!"

He was *crazed* with pain. Manolo was pleased when he fainted again. He could carry him on without noise. Guided now by fires in front, which burned low, but yet gave light, Manolo kept on.

Soon he saw a blasted tree, which he knew reared its lightning-riven head close by his mother's camp. In a few steps he was there. Before a smoldering fire, her head between her thin hands and her elbows resting on her knees, she sat asleep—worn down with anxiety and grief.

"Mother—he is here. Manolo has kept his word!" he said, as he laid Raymond on a pile of blankets close at hand.

"My son—my husband; and both are alive. Holy Father in Heaven, hear my thanks!" she cried as she sprung to her feet.

And then with Manolo, she hurried to revive the sufferer. And when he knew where he was, she

gave him a draught of bitter tea made from sleep-producing herbs.

In a short time he had no pain, he slept calmly as an infant on its mother's loving breast.

Suddenly, alarm guns were heard far up on the hill in front of the mine. Lights were seen flashing to and fro. The escape had been discovered when the midnight relief went to the post.

In vain all excitement then. The wounded prisoner was gone. The Mexican too was absent from his cot and the bound and helpless sentinel showed that the weakness of the pretended fugitive had been only too well assumed.

Yet not until after day dawned was the manner of escape discovered. Then the knotted lariats fast by the edge of the cliff told the whole story.

Bit erily did Mr. Conrad now bewail his weakness in sparing Mortimer for the slow progress of legal punishment.

"If we had hung him to the nearest tree as a murderous wretch who deserved no mercy, we would have been justified by God and man!" he cried.

At dawn, when Mr. Hines, the doctor and Mr. Conrad examined the premises, found the lariats and interrogated the sentinel, all three were lost in wonder at the daring of the merelad who had done it all.

The mark where he had struck the sentinel under the ear proved it was a terrible blow—one that nearly proved his death, for he was yet insensible when found at midnight.

The poor doctor, felt cheapest of all. His sympathies had gone out in the most fatherly way to the Mexican of gentle blood who spoke such pure Castilian.

Yet his action proved he was either a renegade with the Apaches, or a member of Raymond's or Mortimer's own outlaw band.

There was no use in repining. The prisoner they most wanted to hold, was gone—if ever seen again he would die!

CHAPTER L.

THE TWO MESSENGERS.

WHEN Mart Wilder and his partner, old Jake Turk, started on their attempt to reach Tucson, to secure help from the troops, they knew they had a tough trial before them, climbing ragged cliffs, tearing through thorny chaparral, and crossing deep gulches, in hard in the broad light of a cloudless day; how much harder then in the darkness night!

When the light of morning broke on the two old plainsmen, they were so worn out, so utterly exhausted in that first night of travel, that both felt they could not go on without rest, if death stood in the way.

They were on top of the highest ridge, and some miles from their starting-point, but not as far as they wished to be.

Seeing a little level spot of white sand near a small spring, they took a sip of the cool water, and dropped down to sleep, not three yards from the water, in a little bed of short grass. It was then just daylight.

When they awoke, the sun was at least three hours high. Mart was the first one on his feet, and, feeling thirst, he stooped over the spring to dip his cup in the clear water.

What startled him so that he dropped his cup from a trembling hand? What made him utter a cry of wonder and alarm that made his companion wake and spring to his feet, rifle in hand?

"What's up, Mart? You're white as snow in the face!"

"I've reason! Look there!"

He pointed to the narrow strip of sand, not six feet from where both had dropped asleep. When they lay down not a track was there. Now, sunk deep in the sand was the plain imprint of a grizzly's feet—a monster, too, in size, and following it, the smaller track of its cub, leading direct to the spring, and thence into a dark cave, perhaps a pistol-shot away.

"The Lord is marcful—the Lord is marcful!" said Jake, taking off his battered old hat and looking up, reverently.

"And so was the beast! I never knew the like before. With a cub, too. Let's get out of here before she changes her mind!" said Mart, picking up his cup and forgetting that he had been dry and wanted water.

"Come!" said the other, and, with rifles ashoulder, they went on, careful not to crack a twig or stir a pebble as they walked.

And for a mile or more they kept on before either spoke a word.

"Hasn't my hair turned dead white?" asked Mart, then. "I never was so scared in all my life!"

"Ne'er a wonder. Such a claw! One lick from it would have torn either of us inside out. I can't account for it in no way but one!"

"And that?"

"Is that we're needed! We're goin' through safe, pard, for it is to save them people at the mine from murderin' red-skins and worse white skins! Yes—hard, that's it, and I feel better when I think it over. It's what the bookmen call *Providence*, and nothin' short of it!"

"You're right, pard. Let's put in and make as big a tramp as we can afore night. I'll roost in a tree then, for I don't run no more risks—see if I do!"

They kept swiftly on until the sun began to cast shadows from the west, then stopped at a small stream to eat some bread and cold meat, which they washed down with copious draughts from almost ice-cold water.

Then, taking their course by compass, they again broke forward in a walk as rapid as broken ground and occasional chaparrals would permit.

Several times they heard bears crash away to the right or left of them, and once a mountain lion met them face to face, and looked for an instant as if he meant fight.

But the human eye was too much for him. He dropped his tail and fled, without forcing them to use their guns—a thing they would defer to the last limit of necessity, rather than risk arousing the notice of some wandering Indian who might be on a hunt in the mountain range not far from the camps of his kindred.

Near dark they halted, made each his cup of coffee over a little blaze of brush in a hole, ate a hearty meal, and then looked for a place to pass the night.

A tree that leaned toward a cliff served as a ladder to reach a nook in the rocks, sheltered overhead by a shelving ledge. It would be a hard bed, but a safe one, they thought, and they were soon in under the ledge. There they lighted their pipes, had a smoke, then, with their rifles in their hands, their heads pillowed on rock, they fell asleep.

Wearily men sleep well, if not too tired to rest. They woke at dawn, and all was well. They had not been disturbed, nor did they see a sign of unpleasant visitors when they reached the ground.

Again they made coffee and ate a square meal, for, as Mart said, they would strike the dry plains before night, and have to camp next, if they camped at all, in the desert. He knew just where he was. He had prospected in those hills years before, and, with three companions, nearly lost his hair.

Only a storm which washed out their tracks saved them from a big band of Apaches, who were hot on their trail.

After breakfast, with lighter packs, they went on. Now and then, away southeast, they saw through the scrubby forest a vast stretch of open sky, and Mart said they would soon sight the plains.

He was right. The sun was yet two hours high when they came sharp out on a ridge that overlooked a sandy plain that stretched out barren and treeless as far as the eye could reach.

"There it is! Now for water to fill our canteens, and a drink that will last us for all night, to say the least!"

And Mart sighed. Over the rocks and through the chaparral on the hills was not an easy tramp; but to go league upon league through heavy sand, over thorny cactus, in sage-brush not high enough for shelter, but oh! so mean as an obstruction—it was really the worst part of the journey.

And of such travel they would have at least three days before them. Mart even feared it would be more.

But brave and true-hearted, he thought of those whom they had left behind, trusting to them, and centering hope of safety only in their success. He found good water, the canteens were filled, a square supper swallowed and then a long, long draught of water followed.

"Now for it!" said Mart, as he tightened his belt. "We'll tramp as long as we can keep it up and then drop side by side in the sage-brush till morning."

One or the other kept his pipe alight all the time and now and then it served to so light up a compass that they held their course.

It must have been midnight—neither owned a watch whereby to tell, when Jake Turk gave out and said:

"Mart—I'm tuckered all out—let's have a turn a-snorin'!"

Mart willingly agreed and by mutual consent, each took a small sip of anti-snake-bite to give them pleasant dreams.

They had made, Mart estimated, fully twenty miles on the plains before they stopped.

At daylight, rested to a degree, yet feeling sore and stiff, a drink of water and a hurried meal of bread and dried venison gave them life, and again, under a blazing sun, they tramped their weary, monotonous course.

Why shall we follow them over all? There is no need.

It was just five days and six nights when they reached Tucson and reported to General Crook. He knew Mr. Hines well and had once been at the Magdalena mine; when nearly out of stores on a scout he turned in there and got a supply to enable him to reach his post.

Major Summer of the gallant Fifth, had been with him then and was now in Tucson with a battalion of his far famed regiment.

As soon as the general told him how the mine was beleaguered and by whom, the major was afire for a start. Receiving permission, or rather orders to go in and clean out old Geronimo and his band, tooth and toe nail, hide and tallow and not to spare an outlaw whom saber, bullet or rope could punish, he had a week's rations cooked and packed with a week's grain for his horses on a mule train, and by nightfall with Mart Wilder and Jake Turk mounted as guides was on his way with three companies of as good men as ever cheered a brave commander's heart.

Before leaving the town he held a conference with the general, who impressed upon his mind the necessity of a swift and silent movement—no fire or smoke to announce his coming and when near enough to strike, to arrange his force so as to cut off all retreat, thus annihilating the fiends who never spared an enemy.

It was a gallant sight to see those men drawn up in line of battalion as the general inspected them before departure and when the word was given:

"Into column, by fours—right, forward, trot!"

Cheers broke from the lips of hundreds of citizens who knew but for these troops life and property was worth little in the territory.

CHAPTER LI.

JUST IN TIME.

CHIEF GERONIMO came to see Raymond, the morning after his rescue and when told how bravely it was done, he called Manolo a great brave and said if he would promise not to leave the tribe, he should have the command held by Cocine who would never be able to lead a war-party again, crippled as he was.

Manolo would not promise then, but with policy asked time to think the offer over. And he told the great war-chief how nearly he had come to being killed by the treachery of one of Cocine's men who killed his horse and wounded him, instead of playing a pretended part and shooting over him in the chase.

Geronimo ordered the Indian who acted thus into his presence.

When confronted with his accuser he did not deny what he had done, but said Cocine told him Manolo was his enemy and must be slain.

With flashing eyes, Geronimo bade Cocine leave his camp alone and in disgrace and never to stand before him again. And the Indian who shot down the horse of Manolo and wounded him was doomed to death.

But the young Mexican pleaded earnestly for his life and Geronimo spared him.

Cocine, too proud to bear disgrace, drove a knife

into his own heart an hour afterward. Geronimo was not sorry. The sub-chief had become insubordinate and troublesome and was well out of the way.

Days passed and under the marvelous skill of Ignacia, Raymond felt but little pain, although he was yet helpless.

Geronimo still held his ground, having had fifty more warriors join him, and, urged by Raymond, he began seriously to entertain the thought of storming the hill and carrying the mine, even if he lost many warriors.

The wily white man told a marvelous story of the wealth in mineral already smelted out, which he knew was there; of his own money in Conrad's hands, and of the splendid stack of arms, and the great store of ammunition he would capture if he surprised and took the place.

Ever covetous, careless of loss, if there was a chance for victory, Geronimo, eager for scalps and thirsty for blood, was a good subject for Raymond's cunning tongue to reach.

He did not consult Ignacia. He got Manolo to act as interpreter between him and the white chief, saying women knew nothing of war.

Finally he agreed, when the moon was full—and that would be only a few days to wait, he would mass his warriors near the barricade, under cover of some woods, and make the attack.

Once on the grade, he did not doubt but he could carry the hill with a force so much larger than that of those he meant to destroy.

Daily he drilled his warriors, keeping them in courage, and as his hunters kept his camp well supplied, they were all in good heart and ready for war.

On the hill, the rations of grain and forage were so low that the stock had to be fed less than a quarter of the usual amount. Thus they grew weaker day by day.

The stores, and provisions, too, with so many extra men to feed, began to lower all too fast.

Doctor Oatman, Mr. Conrad and Mr. Hines, in consultation with looks of gloom, said if the troops did not soon arrive, they must in desperation fight their own way out, rather than to die like rats in a trap of starvation there.

Their great fear was that Mart Wilder and his partner had failed to get through. Or, if they had reached Tucson, the troops had been withdrawn from there, and none could be had to help them.

Magdalena alone looked bright and happy. Tombstone Dick had rallied wonderfully, and was already able to sit up and to walk across his room leaning on her arm.

He said with such a nurse, he had no choice but to get well.

His mother, more silent and grave than ever, scarce ever smiled. She thought of the villain down among the Indians, and of the fearful threats he had made, and she feared mischief, so long as she knew he lived.

At last the night of the full moon arrived. All day the Indians in masses had been moving up nearer and nearer to the barricade.

The white men under Jones were seen, all dismounted, to be standing in a compact body just out of range.

Mr. Hines, heading two-thirds of the armed force on the hill, took post behind the lower barricade before night fell. Every sign betokened an attack as almost certain.

Further up the hill Mr. Conrad commanded a second barricade on the grade. To this Hines, if he found he was in danger of being overpowered, was to retreat.

Doctor Oatman, with infinite difficulty had succeeded in persuading Magdalena and Mrs. Hartman to carry Dick into the mouth of the mine-shaft, where with half a dozen men and their aid he could hold off ten, or twenty times his number. For he had a train ready in front for a guard to blow up if the enemy should get a foothold on the hill.

It was a still, calm night. The shrill yells of the bloodthirsty red-skins rung out fearfully distinct on the listening ears above.

Suddenly they ceased. Not a sound was heard. "They are creeping on to attack!" said Tombstone Dick, who knew but too well what that ominous silence meant.

Then—all at once, while the round moon high in the cloudless sky, made that valley almost as light as day, there came a burst of music that was sweeter than an angel's song to the beleaguered men and women on that hill.

A dozen shrill bugles sounding the thrilling charge, the flash of sabers and revolvers as the men in blue swept up the plain, sparing nothing that they saw—oh, it was a soul-inspiring sound!

Taken completely by surprise, the Indians just ready to charge the barricade knew not where to turn or what to do.

Hines and his men pouring shot after shot charged them then, and they turned only to meet Summer and his men coming on like a whirlwind.

It was not a fight now. It was a massacre. Revolvers and sabers on every side, the troopers wheeling wherever they saw a foe, shooting and slashing every man not in their uniform.

It could not last long. Geronimo, who with a few braves had gone to the front mounted, made a dash for the hills below the grade and to the number of perhaps ten or fifteen deserting their horses struck shelter in the thick chaparral, or up among the rock-ribbed gorges.

But of all his main body—not one besides those few escaped.

Jones and his outlaw band threw down their arms and cried for mercy. They got it at the revolver's mouth.

"Annihilate them all! Leave not one wretch alive!"

Those were the orders and they were executed to the letter.

For two full hours the troopers rode over all the ground in search of the last living foe—red or white.

And then—the barricades torn away for their passage by willing hands, they rode up the grade to receive the thanks of the grateful people whom they had saved.

There was scant room on the plateau for all, but quarters for a short rest and the best Mr. Conrad had to offer was theirs.

There was no counting rations now—the road was clear to send for more—there was nothing between

them and half a dozen towns and posts that they need fear since Chief Geronimo thrashed, and swept away, was gone to be seen never more in that region of fatal doom for him.

Next day, though the ladies and Tombstone Dick remained on the hill, Mr. Conrad and Hines rode down with Major Sumner to look over the field of battle, and see whom they could recognize. Doctor Oatman went along. He was anxious to see his Mexican gentleman of superior education and to get his surgical hands on the fellow who had treated him so ungratefully.

He found him. He lay cold under a leafy shelter with his head upon the bosom of a dying woman—Ignacia, his mother.

As Mr. Conrad came in sight of this shelter, a voice shrieked out—"Hanging is played out for me! Curse you all—Lew Mortimer dies game!"

The report of a pistol followed, and as they galloped up, they found, yet warm, the bleeding body of their late prisoner. Escape impossible, he died by his own hand, near a rock under which he had sought to hide.

And now, Mr. Conrad, who had seen all of wild life that he cared to, betought him of returning to city life, where he could secure the fortune left him and enjoy it.

Under the care of good Doctor Oatman, he decided to leave his mines, giving his friend, Hines, a full half-interest in the same, and also rewarding well the gallant men who had fought for him by the side of Mr. H.

Through the kindness of Major Sumner, he was offered an escort to the nearest railroad point, and soon after, "Tombstone Dick," now known only as Richard Hartman, Esquire, with his mother and tender, loving Magdalena, filled an ambulance belonging to Doctor Oatman, Eastward bound.

The reader can well imagine what followed. The hero of this story found his reward—a loving bride and a fortune which made him and his mother independent and happy for life.

So—my over-true story has come to a not unpleasant

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